Interview with Richard H. Melton

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

RICHARD H. MELTON

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MELTON: I was born on August 8, 1935 in Rockville, Maryland. My father was from Virginia and my mother was from Maryland. Both are deceased now. I grew up mostly in the Washington area. I traveled some because after my father returned from WWII and remained in the army, we lived briefly in Texas and Arkansas before returning to the DC area. I finished high school here.

I began college at the University of Maryland and after two years, transferred to Cornell University, where I graduated in 1958. I majored in history and government with a slight emphasis on history. My first acquaintance with the Foreign Service came when I was a senior in high school. It was during “Career Day”—or the equivalent—that a Foreign Service pamphlet came to my attention. I had not given that possibility any thought before then. When I went to college, I became very interested in foreign affairs and policy. In looking at various possibilities, it seemed to me that the Foreign Service held the best opportunity to pursue this interest. There may have been opportunities in the private sector, but they were certainly not as extensive as they are today.

There wasn't much of an opportunity to discuss the Foreign Service with anyone at Cornell, except my wife-to-be who also was interested in foreign affairs. People at the

university were pretty much self-absorbed and not greatly concerned with life outside the ivy walls.

I had joined the ROTC while at Cornell—I had started that at Maryland where I joined the Air Force program. The draft was very much alive; so most of my friends had joined the Reserves or the ROTC. As graduation approached, I had had three years of Air Force ROTC. I was in the pilot training program, but during my participation in the program, the rules were changed requiring 5-1/2 years of active duty for those entering pilot training. Since I was not interested in making the Air Force my career, I switched to the Army ROTC during my senior year which meant that I had to take all of the required Army basic courses in my senior year—that was a burden. After graduation, in 1958 I was commissioned as a second lieutenant and served until 1961.

In the Army, I completed my basic training at Fort Bragg and then attended an intelligence staff course at Fort Holabird, Maryland. After that, I was assigned to the Pentagon and later to Fort Meade, Maryland. At Fort Meade, I was an “Order of Battle” specialist, assessing the capability of various military units. We spent most of our time in training situations, using documents from WWII—which had very little relevance to then current matters. Toward the end of my tour, my commanding officer sent me and a fellow officer to a friend of his who was working in the Pentagon to see whether we could be used there. When we went to his office, he showed us boxes and boxes of material that had never been opened; he thought they were of little importance. We looked at them and found that most of the material concerned Vietnam, which had not yet become a hot domestic issue although we were already involved.

When I was discharged in 1961, I had already passed the Foreign Service entrance examination. So I took an interim job with the Library of Congress while waiting for the Department of State to call me. While in the Army, I had taken some graduate courses in history at Maryland University. That helped me in the job in the Legislative Reference Service where I remained for several months.

Library of Congress

I joined the Service in the Summer of 1961, several months after President Kennedy's inauguration. I remember going to the Inauguration Ball in the snow. I was then almost 26, about average for my class. A number of my colleagues had graduate degrees; others had just gotten out of college. Some had military experience; a few were graduates of a service academy. I managed to stay in touch with many during my career. A number left the Service before I did, but I think the majority stayed until retirement. I don't think we had a single woman in the class nor any African Americans.

I think most of us were imbued with the Kennedy spirit which called for “service to our country.” The campaign had been a rousing one; I had gone to one Kennedy rally at the University of Maryland, even though I had not been politically active. But I had a relative, an uncle, who was a long-time Democratic staffer on the Hill. It was he who took us to the Inaugural Ball.

During the A-100 course, we were asked about our area interests. My first choice then—and that was true for the next 10-15 years—was to study Italian and be assigned to Rome. I never got close! My first assignment was in Washington—as was true for about 1/3 of my class—first to language training so that I could attain the language proficiency required of all officers prior to full entry into the competitive ranks.

My first regular assignment was in the Operations Center, which had just been set up—one of Kennedy's innovations. In 1961, it was headed on paper by Ted Achilles—a senior Foreign Service officer—but the key figure was Steve Smith, the President's brother-in-law in his capacity as deputy to Achilles. When Smith was present—and frequently he was not—we knew whose opinions counted most in the Operations Center. Three junior officers were selected as watch officers; the Center ran 24 hours a day, and the older FSOs didn't want to pull the night shift; that left the three of us to take care of the night work on a rotating basis. The other two were Herb Hoffman, since retired, and Gerry Studds—today a Massachusetts Congressman.

At the beginning, the Center was very rudimentary. Some people had been brought in from the outside. The communications system was not nearly as elaborate as it is today; in fact one of the first conclusions by the managers of the Center was that the Department's communications system was atrocious. Luke Battle, who followed Ted Achilles as head of the Center made a major effort to upgrade its facilities. He briefed the Secretary, giving greatest emphasis to the state of the communications systems. He thought that the people overseas were out of touch and couldn't be reached rapidly in time of crisis and he was quite right. Our ability to communicate with them was mediocre at best.

But I found my tour very interesting because it was a period of great activity in the foreign affairs field—e.g. the Cuban missile crisis. I remember the message traffic and the concern it raised in my mind; it was clear to me that war was quite possible and yet I couldn't say or do anything. I was very relieved when the Soviets turned their ships around—very few people knew about that when it happened. By the time of that crisis, I was the reports editor; I worked the night shift and saw all the significant communications coming in during that period. I would then prepare the morning summary for the Secretary. During the missile crisis, we set up a task force and I was assigned to summarize the significant messages from Latin America—reactions to the events and the possibility of war and the efforts to line up diplomatic support in advance.

During my tour in the Ops Center, the Berlin Wall went up. I was on duty when some of the crucial decisions were made. Lucius Clay had gone to West Germany as a special emissary. There was a very active debate on what US actions should be and what the Soviet reaction might be. There was one school of thought that urged us to just knock it down with tanks. Those with more cautious views prevailed, with stalemate being the eventual result. I was privy to many of the messages and communications within the U.S. Government on Berlin. The debate was quite fierce and the options were mostly cataclysmic—no one knew what the Soviet reactions might be and therefore once again there was a possibility of a major conflict.

Another major foreign policy issue that was debated while I was in the Ops Center was what to do about the Congo. Frank Carlucci—who I would encounter later in my career in Brazil and Portugal—was there at the time. There was a lot of discussion about Tshombe and Katanga and people and places long forgotten.

From time to time, some of the Department's principals would come to the Ops Center to see this new beast. I served there for one year because it was a job that physically was so taxing that one couldn't take much more than that. We used to be on duty at times for 20 hours straight, taking short naps on a cot that the Department provided. Essentially we worked on a four-days-on, two-days-off basis, with the three junior officers taking their turn, but a year was about all one could stand of that.

After that year, my boss suggested that I apply for a “Congressional Fellowship” even though I did not strictly meet the experience criteria. I was selected and became the first Foreign Service officer to participate in this program sponsored by American Political Science Association. Today that program is still alive and has grown considerably. Many FSOs have participated. So for the next year, I worked on the Hill.

I spent the first six months working for a freshman Congressman from Maryland, Carlton Sickles and the second six months for Senator Claiborne Pell. The first job was quite interesting in part because I joined his staff before he even took office. I went around with him helping to select office space and doing other things just to get his office open and running. I knew something about Maryland politics so that I fit in with the rest of the staff. I worked on education and labor issues—subjects in which he had great interest having been a lawyer for the AFL-CIO in Maryland. Sickles later ran for governor. Despite being the initial favorite, he lost to George Mahoney in the Democratic primary—the perennial candidate who always ran, never won, but spoiled for others. That gave Spiro Agnew, the Republican candidate, an opening and he became the governor; the rest is history.

Pell had been a Foreign Service officer and at the time was a member of the Education and Labor Committee. That was one of the reasons that I was anxious to join his staff because he represented continuity on issues I had followed on the House side for Sickles. Pell wanted to join the Foreign Relations Committee, but had not made it yet. Eventually, after much lobbying, he was given a seat on that Committee. Pell was of course interested in foreign affairs and had a number of people on his staff who concentrated on that area as well.

The Hill was an extremely valuable experience which would stand me in good stead during my career. At the time, I looked at this assignment, perhaps naively, as an investment in the individual, looking at the long-term benefits from a career point of view. Most of the Executive Branch departments and agencies looked at the program as an opportunity for an immediate payoff and therefore sent some of their Congressional relations specialists—almost all being Civil Servants. I thought that it was a mistake for the program to be used as a training ground for lobbyists and later I argued against the Department following that pattern. I thought that investment in people was much more important.

The program was excellent and, as I said, I used my experience in it in my subsequent career. It helped for example in my work overseas with Congressional Delegations (CODELs). I acquired an appreciation of the role of Congress during my fellowship on the Hill, so that regardless of my standing in the embassy pecking order at the time, I always welcomed CODELs. I viewed them as an opportunity for a post to get its message across to some very influential people. The members of Congress, away from the daily pressures, have time during their travels to reflect on foreign affairs. It is an opportunity that the Foreign Service needs to harvest more.

In 1963, I was assigned to Managua, Nicaragua. I called one of my friends with whom I had worked in the Ops Center to ask whether there were any other possibilities. There were: Veracruz, Mexico or Managua. I didn't know where either was; I knew that Veracruz was where the “Ship of Fools” went. I asked my friend to read the post reports for both

places; he told me that neither was Paradise, but that Managua was an embassy and therefore was likely to have possibilities for more interesting work. He recommended that I accept Managua and I did.

I remember coming to the Department from the Hill by cab with my friend. We were talking about Managua and the cab driver began laughing and humming. He said he had been there in the Air Force during World War II and painted a very grim picture of Nicaragua, but by then it was too late—the assignment had been made. I stayed in Managua from 1963 to 1965—two years.

I was assigned to the Political Section of the Embassy as a labor officer. Toward the end of my tour, I did some economic reporting as well, but during most of my tour I did political reporting with emphasis on labor affairs.

During the first part of my tour, Nicaragua was undergoing a small economic boomlet, based on cotton and beef production. The political structure was dominated by elites in the two major cities outside of Managua, Leon and Granada—one Liberal, the other Conservative. The politics of the country tended to be dominated by the traditional old families from those two cities. The Somozas were super imposed on that traditional structure, although the old families continued to set the pace for the country. There was only a small middle class, leaving the majority of the people confined to the lower economic strats which was predominantly agricultural. Most of the people lived along the West Coast; the center of the country was sparsely populated and the East Coast was the home of the Miskito Indians, but also sparsely populated. Nicaragua, unlike Guatemala for example, did not have a large Indian presence.

Nicaragua was going through a period of hope during my tour. Anastasio Somoza, the old dictator, had died and had been succeeded by the more liberal son, Luis, who was about to step down to be replaced by a close friend of the Somozas, Rene Schick, a former judge. Schick, although handpicked by the Somozas, demonstrated a welcome degree

of independence,. The hope was that he would serve as a bridge to a more open political system. That did not happen. The untimely deaths of both Luis Somoza and Rene Schick led to Anastasio Jr, “Tachito,” assuming the Presidency putting an end to the period of hope. But that did not happen until after I had left. So during the 1963-65 period, there were indications that Nicaragua was moving towards a more democratic system. So this was an interesting period—a time of possibilities—in Nicaragua's political life.

Somoza's National Guard was one of the principal barriers to this hoped-for political transition. It was a single military force; it was never as large as later reports suggested—probably in the 7,000 man range. That was not out of line even with countries like Costa Rica which had no military force, but only police. Later reports made the Guard seem much larger and all powerful. While in Managua, I managed to do some English teaching at the binational center. The students and I would frequently enter into discussions and the role of the National Guard was a frequent topic. I was certainly not a defender of the Guard, but I felt obliged to provide my students some factual material, such as the size of the force and its relationship to the U.S.. It is then that I found that the Guard's size was greatly overestimated by Nicaraguans and that there was an unjustified aura about it.

Most of my contacts were with the would-be-opposition; the Liberal and Conservative parties—the traditional ones—were family run and split by internal conflicts. The Liberal Party had become an instrument of the Somozas. The opposition was largely ineffective, but among labor there were some members of the Christian-democratic-social movement which was beginning to advance throughout the continent. That movement was associated with the Church and its hierarchy. It was showing some vibrancy in Nicaragua, particularly in the non-Somoza labor movement. I got to know a lot of the members of this new movement; most were quite young. Those contacts became quite useful when I returned 25 years later for my second tour in Nicaragua.

The Alliance for Progress was a new American effort to improve the standards of living in Latin America. It was a Kennedy-inspired program. So we had large assistance missions

in many Latin American countries, including Nicaragua. The problems in a place like Nicaragua was that its political system was a closed one dominated by the Somozas. That made the management of a program like the Alliance for Progress difficult because it had as one of its objectives the propagation of a democratic political system. That of course was not welcomed in a country like Nicaragua. Furthermore, all assistance tended to feed into the Somoza system making it difficult to separate economic development assistance from support of the Somoza regime.

One of the problems we had was to satisfy one of our clients: the AFL-CIO. My own analysis was shared by my boss, the Political Counselor: I thought that the Christian-Democrats did represent a voice for democracy. They were also dedicated to trade union principles. There was another strand in the Nicaraguan labor movement which was much more politically oriented; that group supported Somoza's Liberal Party and had the backing of the AFL-CIO because it viewed this segment of Nicaraguan labor to be more aggressively anti-communist. Even though I recognized the importance of the AFL-CIO position, I was at cross purposes with American labor because I tended to believe that the Christian Democrats in the Nicaraguan labor movement deserved at least equal access to US support because it was far more active in its pursuit of a democratic political system for Nicaragua. Fortunately, our USAID mission had a wise labor technical assistance officer who was in charge of conducting training programs. He was an old-line communications worker; we became good friends. We had a visit from an AFL-CIO delegation which wanted me to be removed for being unsympathetic to the AFL-CIO position in Nicaragua. My friend from U.S. labor movement gave me full support and shielded me from the ire of his union colleagues. I found out from the head of the delegation that it had come to Nicaragua prepared to award a medal to Anastasio Somoza, Jr. I objected strenuously; I talked to the Political Counselor who agreed with me that that would be a disaster for the U.S. image and the course of democracy in Nicaragua, and we finally dissuaded the delegation from this unwise course.

We did manage to get the AFL-CIO to move a little, but not nearly enough. This was the era of a very tough anti-communist line in the AFL-CIO. Eventually, after my departure, the AFL-CIO came around grudgingly accepted the importance of the Christian-Democratic movement.

Aaron Brown was our Ambassador; he was a fine man. He had been the Department's chief personnel officer. He was from New England and had all of the classic virtues which we tend to associate with people from that region—straight, honest, forthright. He told his people when they were right and when they were wrong and supported you when necessary. A first rate ambassador. He supported our position on dealing with the Christian Democrats, he was very frank about the reality of the situation. I attended many meetings with him and Nicaraguan leaders, particularly younger ones. He would always be asked why the U.S. could not be more active in supporting efforts to replace the Somozas. His answer was that Nicaragua was their country and they would have to do all the heavy lifting; his advice was that since the Nicaraguans would have to live with the results of any political change, they better give long thought to what actions they might take. The U.S. would not take the heat for any political change which might not be acceptable to Nicaraguans in general; they would have to take responsibility for their own actions. That was a sound message.

It should be noted that the Sandinistas were in existence in 1963. As a matter of fact, the head of the movement, Carlos Fonseca Amador, was captured by the National Guard while I was in Managua. The government held him for a while, but then concluded that he and his followers were of no great significance and released him—after beating and torturing him. He left unimpeded by the government. The other locus of opposition was the Christian Democratic movement that I discussed earlier. It was bolstered by the defection of some major figures in the Conservative Party. Some oppositionists defected to the Sandinistas and remained with them, but most like Mrs. Chamorro, split from the Sandinistas later. But that is another story.

Our policy toward Nicaragua was an aberration. Prior to Ambassador Brown's arrival, we had allowed one political appointee and Somoza friend, Thomas Whelan, to remain in place for ten years. US administration after administration accepted Somoza as an immovable reality. The Bay of Pigs operation in part was launched from Nicaragua—Puerto Cabezas on the east coast. So there was a bond between the countries even though the question of what the U.S. should be doing in the twilight of the Somoza regime was being discussed. As I said, the Alliance had a strong bias toward building democracy and that gave us good reason to consider a Nicaragua without Somoza. But as I said, in general, in a country like Nicaragua, it was very difficult for an assistance program not to support the existing regime. That was a problem.

Nicaragua had at one time a thriving banana industry, but by 1963, there was no major American firm like United Fruit or Standard Fruit which dominated the life of the country as these mega-firms did in other Central American countries. There were no large US investment in Nicaragua in the early 1960s. Cotton was a major product because Nicaragua had the right soil and climate to make it a fruitful producer. It was a relatively new crop for the country and American firms had not managed to become the large land owners that they had in other countries. So the U.S., particularly in light of the Alliance for Progress, had a pretty good reputation in the rural areas where its programs managed to achieve positive results—schools, public health facilities, etc.

Somoza had a unique relationship to the U.S.. He was a graduate of West Point; he had a lot of friends in the U.S. who gave him support—far more than any other leader in Central America. It was quite clear to us that particularly Anastasio, Jr. had access to privileged American information—i.e. Embassy reporting. We had the feeling sometimes that he was actually reading our messages. Anastasio had a fix on every officer in the Embassy—he soon segregated the staff into friend or foe. It was quite clear that he did not include members of the Political Section, myself included, in the “friend” category. I remember attending a dinner given by the former Nicaragua Labor Minister, whom I considered a

first rate person, along with the Political Counselor. We were chatting when Somoza came over to join us. He said, somewhat sarcastically: “Ah, my good friends from the American Embassy...” although this was my first face-to-face encounter, it was clear that he knew a lot about us and our views.

Even as a junior officer, we, as diplomats, had access to some privileged places. We were readily accepted wherever we went. One of my children was born in Nicaragua. The facilities were modest; this was a time when Managua had not yet modernized, although in the pre-Nicaraguan days it was in some ways more varied and attractive than it is now. Since I worked with labor unions, I probably had more access to the average Nicaraguan than most of my colleagues. The friendships I made were lasting ones and greatly helped in my return to Nicaragua some 25 years later.

Q: That brings us to 1965. Were you still looking for that assignment to Rome? How did you end up in the Dominican Republic?

MELTON: I still put Rome at the top of my wish list that was to be submitted every April 1—April Fool's Day. Of course the Department ignored this repeated request. But my next assignment was interesting. I thought that I was going to Canada—I had not yet done a tour in consular work as was expected of all junior officers at the time. I thought that I was going to go to Ottawa to work in the consular section there. My wife objected; Ottawa was too close to the U.S. and to Cornell, where we had both attended university. As things turned out, we didn't go to Ottawa because the Consul General wanted someone else—a nice young lady that he knew.

So after looking around, the Personnel Office found a slot for me in the Dominican Republic. The Embassy was being turned over at the time following an outbreak of violence and the landing of US forces under the authority of the OAS, and I ended in Santo Domingo where I served from 1965 to 1967. I arrived just as the fighting had ceased, but the political situation was still very unstable.

The Dominican Republic had also lived under dictatorship for many years. Like General Somoza in Nicaragua, General Trujillo had been in charge from the 1930s, until he was assassinated in 1961. He was followed by Joaquin Balaguer and Juan Bosch, who was overthrown in 1963. In 1965, some Bosch adherents took up arms. The regular military force had disintegrated and fragmented. At one point one of the rebel leaders had come to the U.S. Embassy and offered to surrender in exchange for certain considerations. The U.S. Ambassador, Tapley Bennett, refused to get involved and suggested to the rebel leader, Caemono, that he turn himself in to the authorities. That infuriated the rebel leader, who not only did not surrender, but redoubled his armed efforts and virtually brought down the government. Finally, under an OAS mandate, forces from the United States and Brazil, plus token contingents from Nicaragua and Honduras, intervened and stopped the bloodshed in Santo Domingo, where many thousands of people were at risk.

When I arrived, the Embassy staff had been almost completely changed. The Department, quite wisely, had made the judgement that old staff was no longer relevant and almost all were replaced. We were a new team charged with trying to stabilize the situation. Peace was maintained by elements of the 82nd Airborne Division and other foreign military forces that were still in place when I left two years later. The American contingent did admirable work; they showed great restraint in every respect, which was not true for all of the other troops. Our soldiers conducted themselves very properly.

Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker was there representing the OAS-led multilateral effort. Soon Ambassador Bennett was replaced by John Crimmins as chief of mission. That was an unusual situation because Crimmins had been assigned as the DCM. Frank Devine was then assigned as DCM. So we had a situation where we seemed to have two DCMs—although we all knew that eventually Crimmins would become the Ambassador. Despite some confusion for his handling of the situation, Ambassador Bennett went to Portugal as our ambassador and then to NATO, as our Permanent Representative, thanks in part

to his good Georgia connections. Crimmins, for his part, was a tremendously capable, energetic chief of mission; he did a first rate job.

I was assigned to Santo Domingo as the commercial attach# although I had never actually done much economic work. What I actually ended up doing was handling the debt claims of Americans against a bankrupt Dominican government. I would periodically go to the Dominican budget director and present a list of claims, mostly from American firms who had not been paid for work they had done for the government. The Dominicans quite rightly pointed out that many of the debts were of questionable origin, but all took their place in the line for payment. One of the large claimants was Felix Benitez Rexach, a US citizen of Puerto Rican origin who had befriended Trujillo soon after his rise to power. He was rewarded by becoming the major contractor for all public works in Santo Domingo. He built the port and other major public facilities. Both he and Trujillo profited from this arrangement. He had many holdings which the post-Trujillo regime expropriated. So he asked the U.S. government to take up his claims; that confronted us with a dilemma. Undoubtedly here was a US citizen who had legitimate claims; the method by which these assets were originally acquired was another matter.

I had to deal with this. I listened to Mr. Rexach for hour after hour, day after day, and, in fact, we struck up a good relationship. He would come in to see me two or three times each week—along with his lawyer. He would leave the lawyer in our waiting room and then regale me with stories about Trujillo and his gang. As matters developed, Mr. Rexach became increasingly more interested in just talking to me; he seldom actually pressed his claim or urged me to do so. He just wanted to chat. The Ambassador was quite concerned about the potential the claims case held for disrupting our assistance and reconstruction efforts in the country. An expropriation finding could lead to a reaction long after I departed the Dominican Republic. Under Trujillo the Dominican Republic had been granted a large quota which allowed them to sell sugar to the United States at prices well above the world

price. Trujillo worked assiduously with key members of the U.S. Congress to maintain the U.S. sugar quota.

The 1965 uprising eventually led to the victory of Joaquin Balaguer over Juan Bosch in an OAS-supervised election. Balaguer ran the country for the next 30 years. A frail looking man, slight of stature, Balaguer was an amazing physical specimen—only someone with exceptional stamina could carry on for all of this time. During the Trujillo era, he was viewed as a secondary player and a creature of the dictator. In fact, he turned out to be far more than that; he provided continuity to the system, which without the presence of someone like Balaguer, might have collapsed.

Sugar has long been important in the Dominican Republic. The reason there wasn't greater tension relating to the sugar trade was that American production is primarily from beets, whereas the Dominican production came from cane. There was a sort of splitting of the pie between the two producers. The sugar quota covered only the cane grown product. As long as US beet growers were getting their desired price, the import quota could be split among various cane growers; with no economic impact on the U.S. producers. American growers did not show much interest in that issue, leaving it to growers like the Dominicans to fight over the quota. Trujillo was interested in getting the lion's share of that quota. Since the American producers could not have competed in an open market due to higher production costs and since the quota ensured a profit for some sugar imports, all producers seemed to profit from the system—only the consumers and the U.S. taxpayers suffered.

This was my first experience with an embassy that was primarily staffed by non-State Department people. The Foreign Service officers and staff were a minority. We had a huge assistance mission; in addition to USAID, there were many other US agencies represented in Santo Domingo. We had for example one of the first FBI offices in the region.

There was a definite Trujillo legacy even though he had been dead for several years. One of the reasons why the instability had developed so rapidly and had gone so far was the weak and corrupt political system and the inability of the armed forces to intervene effectively to restore law and order. One small disciplined group was able to influence the entire country. The armed forces, although large, were undisciplined and had no will to fight.

At the time of our military intervention in the Dominican Republic, there was a hew and cry in the U.S. about our actions. Most of this happened before I arrived in Santo Domingo. By then, I didn't hear much debate about the appropriateness of the U.S. action. We were concerned about the proper role of the U.S. in the post-invasion period and how we and the OAS might extract the military force from the country without allowing the Dominican Republic to retrogress to its dictatorial period. The test was whether in an election the people would be permitted to make a fair choice. That objective became Ellsworth Bunker's principal goal. The OAS maintained its own views; Bunker had many non-Americans on his staff. I think that they did a good job in establishing the proper environment for a democratic election and the transfer of power to the winner.

There was some sentiment of skepticism, particularly among opposition groups, about the presence of foreign military forces. They viewed intervention as designed to block a return to power by the Bosch forces. We were accused of seeing communists under every bed and of exaggerating the “red” threat; therefore, the critics asserted, our intervention was counter-productive to democratic development. We were viewed as defenders of the status quo. On the other hand, what actually happened—the holding of free elections under OAS monitoring—did establish our credibility with these groups—to the extent that they would give any credibility to a US initiative. My view was that our policy of trying to make our intervention a positive action was correct.

Under Trujillo, of course, all of the people in power were part of a closed political system. It was a corrupt system. But the corruption was highly centralized and organized. If

bribes were paid, it was all according to a well established and understood system, as was their distribution. When Trujillo was assassinated, the system began to disintegrate and corruption became anarchic. Every official was on his own and had the freedom to squeeze as much as he or she could. That made corruption much harder to deal with because it was unpredictable; in a strange way, even those who had been corrupt began to feel uncomfortable about the new chaotic process of bribery and pay-offs.

I should note that as in Nicaragua a number of Dominican contacts showed up later during my career—e.g. Balaguer, Juan Bosch. They lasted for a long time on the Latin American scene.

Q: Then in 1967, you were transferred to Recife, Brazil where you served until 1969.

MELTON: That is correct. Assignments at the time were for two years; later they became three year tours. I was still relatively new to the Foreign Service and relatively new to ARA; I had not established any contacts with the Washington Latin American bureaucracy. I did not in 1967 believe that I had joined the ARA club.

By this time, I was quite comfortable speaking Spanish and by being assigned to Brazil, I learned Portuguese as well. At the time, FSI had a branch in Rio which allowed me to spend some time in that city—one of the benefits of being assigned to a small consulate in Northern Brazil. I spent nine weeks in Rio de Janeiro immersing myself in Portuguese, which came a little easier to me because of my knowledge of Spanish. Nine weeks was shorter than most people spent in language training. There are both a lot of differences and similarities between the two languages. I didn't find it too difficult to move from one to the other, but there were some in our small language class, who did not have Spanish and they had a much harder time.

I must admit that I was initially disappointed with Rio; when we flew in the city looked just like it does on postcards—beautiful amid spectacular geographic surroundings. But on the ground, you run into some deficiencies. Services don't work so well; the sewage and

garbage collections leave much to be desired. The city has been allowed to develop in a way that makes living for many quite difficult. Tall buildings have been allowed to be built almost right on the beach. Foot traffic does not flow very well. So I found Rio to be depressing at the time; it was a dirty city.

In 1964, there had been a change in governments in Brazil. The military had moved in to block an alleged takeover of the government by the left. The U.S. had become quite active in Brazil at about the same time with the launching of a large Alliance for Progress program. The northeast of the country became a large recipient of US assistance. At the same time, the Catholic Church was under considerable pressure, primarily from a very liberal group of priests, to assume a more active political role. The Peasant Leagues were founded under Francisco Juliano and others, with the support of a number of priests. There were land take-overs, accompanied by violence, followed by military repression. The American diplomatic presence in Recife was quite modest and dwarfed by the USAID staff of the Alliance. By the time I left in 1969, I was the senior State Department officer in Recife, even though I was quite junior. When I arrived in 1967, the Consul General was a Foreign Service officer—Grant Hilliker; by the time I left, due to the friction between the USAID and State staff, the CG was Donor Lion—a USAID official. Lion was both the CG and the Director of the USAID mission. The amalgamation of these two positions was an effort to resolve the friction between the two bureaucracies, as well as the duality of policy advice that had at times flowed from Recife. In fact, there were really no contest; all of the resources belonged to USAID with almost 200 Americans connected with the assistance program stationed in Recife and only three Americans who represented the diplomatic side of our presence. The Alliance staff took its direction from its Rio headquarters so that in the end, the CG had to fall into step.

My first job was that of a political officer. I did reporting. There was a Vice-Consul handling consular matters and the Consul General. In 1967, we covered seven states in the northeast. By 1969, Recife covered nine northeast states. Initially, we did not have responsibility for the Amazon region, but by 1969 we were responsible for that as well.

We had had a consulate in Manaus, but when it was closed, responsibility for the Amazon basin fell to Recife.

The military government was quite tough and authoritarian. When I arrived, Castelo Branco was in charge. He was succeeded by other military officers. There was a real policy debate going on both in the Embassy and in Washington about our stance toward this military dictatorship. The core issue was economic vs. political development—an artificial dichotomy. One school felt that by providing assistance and supporting economic growth, political development would be forthcoming. That school felt that the U.S. should support virtually any government that had a sound economic policy—even if that meant relegating political growth to a secondary place on the U.S. agenda.

The other school felt that the U.S. policy could not accept development in one area without comparable growth in the other. The U.S. should not support policies in the name of economic growth which at the same time limited political freedoms. So that was the debate within the U.S. establishment. The debate tended to become personalized very quickly, at least within the Embassy. I remember that we in Recife tended to focus on political development and our reporting on repressive measures being taken in the northeast was well received by some segments of the Embassy and not by others. In the Embassy, the Political Counselor was Frank Carlucci who had been the Executive Assistant to Ambassador Tuthill. He had been the energetic leader of “Operation Topsy” which called for serious cutbacks in the U.S. presence in Brazil. The USAID mission and the Economic Section tended to favor economic development as our primary objective and dismissed substandard performance in the political area on the grounds that once Brazil had developed economically, it would be more likely to follow a democratic path.

During Tuthill's era, the “balanced development” school tended to have the upper hand. After his departure, the “economic development first” model appeared to dominate the thinking of the Embassy and therefore the U.S. government. So in a sense our reporting from Recife was somewhat out of step after Tuthill's departure.

In general, there are usually different perspectives between consulates and embassies. For example, in one of my later assignments, I had a chance to see the Brazilian consulates and the Embassy in Brasilia. Sao Paulo was a post right in the middle of the industrial area of Brazil where economic development and related policies are predominant. In that case, the best reporting on Brazilian economic activity came from a consulate rather than from Brasilia.

It was very difficult to cover this vast expanse of land of northeast Brazil from Consulate General Recife. I did a lot of traveling—almost all of it by air because of the distances. I would try to cover two or three states on each trip. In each capital, I would start with the contacts that I had developed and then try to broaden my list. I would spend several days in each capital. I would try to bring myself up to date on the issues we were interested in and then write my reports when I returned to Recife. I would try to arrange some appointments by phone or through the mails. When I arrived at a location, I would arrange for other contacts, but I usually had some initial calls arranged ahead of time. Those calls were the foundation of a visit program. For example, Fortaleza, the state capital in Ceara, was an important area because it had a banking institution—the Bank of the Northeast. There were some other groups of interest there—progressive Catholic churchmen, some political activists. We focused on areas of concern to the US, in addition to the local politics which might have been of interest in the state, but not necessarily of national importance or of immediate interest to us. We looked for issues with national implications. We would follow local issues and tried to be informed about them, but those were not of great interest to the Embassy or Washington.

We reported on national political and economic issues, such as developments effecting the Church, which had a political role as well as a spiritual one. It was going through a period of internal debate, as part of the global discussion which was then ongoing. The Catholic Church was an important factor in Brazil. There were some 245 bishops in Brazil at the time; I doubt that there were one-third as many in the US. The Church was a power,

both in Brazil and globally. The bishops took stances on social issues, which had political implications; therefore their views were of interest to us. So I maintained contacts with all of the leading churchmen in the Northeast and made a point of meeting with the bishop in every state that I visited. All of the major states had at least one bishop. Several of them were very influential nationally. Dom Helder Camera was the bishop in Olinda, right across the river from Recife. Jose Maria Pires, at the time Brazil's only Black bishop, was in nearby Joao Pessoa; he was an influential leftist churchman. There were several conservative bishops in other northeast states; the President of the National Council of Bishops was in Teresina, a small town in the interior of the state of Fortaleza—I don't know if any American diplomat had ever been there. I did. I made a point of going to places where there was someone of interest to the United States.

We also had an economic officer in the Consulate; sometimes we traveled together and talked to the same people, attempting to meld political and economic perspectives. At other times, we went our separate ways. If I traveled alone, I might also cover economic issues and talk to people on those matters.

As I said, when I made these visits I would prearrange a certain number of calls. When I got to the city I would add other people, sometimes at the suggestion of one of my original contacts. They might sometimes help me make those additional appointments. I would always try to call on the local authorities in each state. That is important in a country like Brazil; a diplomatic representative is expected to follow local custom, which includes calls on local authorities. If one doesn't, that could quickly lead to problems. I would call on the military commanders everywhere as well as the police commanders, if they were different than the military ones. I would call on church officials, on governors, on mayors—it should be noted that by this time, the military had intervened in all of the states. So governors, mayors, and other local officials were all appointed by the military. In some cases the appointees had been very popular and had a base of support of their own. Many people, it should be remembered, supported the military take over in 1964; that was particularly true in the Northeast. So there was not a uniform revulsion about military government; on the

contrary, many Brazilians welcomed the take over and supported the new regime both at the state and national levels. So the local political leadership was a mixed bag.

I should also mention the students, who at this time, were becoming active. I maintained contacts with them as well. It was the policy of the Kennedy administration to show interest in youth worldwide. That continued into the Johnson administration. We had someone in the Embassy—a USIA officer—who was designated as the youth officer. He was younger than I, and had a mixed effect. He also maintained contacts with students. The people I knew were much more interesting and tended to be much more attuned to our concerns.

I also kept in touch with labor leaders. In the Northeast, we had, as I mentioned, the Peasant Leagues, which were a rural labor movement. The Church gave it support through its worker-priests who acted as organizers in rural areas. The two best known were Father Paulo Crespo and Antonio Mello, both of whom operated just outside of Recife in Pernambuco state. I got to know both of them quite well. Both were highly activist, one tended to be a little more conservative and orthodox than the other, but both were very effective and therefore much disliked by the military authorities.

I arrived in Brazil with the view that US policy was properly disposed to support democratic governments. I arrived with some skepticism about military rule, which was consistent with U.S. policy. Therefore, we supported opening of the political process and strengthening of political institutions. In Nicaragua, I had not seen notable progress in similar efforts, but it was clear to me that Ambassador Brown's policy was correct—that is we were as supportive of liberalization as circumstances permitted, but the ultimate responsibility resided with the Nicaraguans. As for the Dominican Republic, I arrived after the die had been cast. Following the intervention, I think our policy was quite clear; we were trying to promote democratic elections and efforts toward political liberalization. Both countries had been ruled for a long time by military dictatorships. So I was accustomed to military dictatorships. Brazil had had a democratic election which had been overturned by the

military in 1964—largely because of economic failures. It was clear that the country had a strong democratic predilection which were trying to strengthen.

The debate within the mission was on how to give support to these Brazilian democratic tendencies. Was economic development a necessary precursor to political development? It was the classic debate. I think in the Northeast we saw signs of the heavy hand of the government although there were some encouraging indicators, such as the military's interest in economic development. The government was devoting considerable resources to development of the region; it had a lot of novel schemes, such as redistributing resources from other parts of the country into the Northeast. As we gained experience we learned that some things work and others don't. The government's role was actually much more limited than anticipated; concern that the government would be too deeply involved in economic development was, in the main, not justified. The government's impact was much limited than the government would acknowledge at the time and that was shown by later studies.

Of course, the military defended its role by suggesting that we Americans just didn't understand Brazilian culture and habits. We got that line from many sources—mostly on the right. There was a doctrine in existence at the time that the Southern cone was fighting the world's battle against the “Godless atheists”—i.e. the communists. They were taking up the cause that we Americans didn't have the guts or the heart to do; according to this view, the Latin American military were really fighting our war and that we were naive in our approach to communism. We certainly heard that message many times from the military.

For example, one of the responsibilities of a diplomatic establishment is the protection of its citizens. In Northeast Brazil, there were a number of American priests and nuns, brought to Brazil by the Church which customarily sends foreigners to countries which suffer from shortages in religious vocations. A number of these American clergy were socially engaged; that brought them into conflict with the military, which emphasized order and viewed such social activism as disruptive. As I mentioned earlier, we maintained

contact with the Church; it was in 1968-69 when we were told that two American priests had just disappeared in Recife. No one seemed to know where they were; people were frightened by this development. We made inquiries and discovered that the two were actually being held by the Recife police. We let the authorities know that we were looking for these two American citizens and that we understood that they might be in their custody. The police reluctantly acknowledged that indeed the priests were under arrest. Reluctantly also we were finally granted access to them, as indeed was our right under various treaties. The Consul General and I went to see the priests; then we went to see the 4th Army commander—a very senior four star general. With him, we had a variation of the conversation I described earlier; “You Americans don't understand how to combat the evil of communism.” Of course our reply was that it was he, the general, who did not understand how to fight communism. That conversation did not go very far in getting the priests released. But our intervention and subsequent daily visits made it clear to the government that the U.S. was interested in the fate of the two priests and therefore provided a degree of protection to them.

Eventually, the Brazilian military hardened its position. They decided to charge them under sedition laws, which would have called for a trial by a military court. The penalty would have been thirty years in prison. They gave the priests the choice of voluntary departure or a military trial—where the decision was preordained. That choice created a crisis of conscience for the priests. Their superiors from St. Louis had arrived by that time, and the dialogue about their future had been raised to higher levels in Brasilia and Washington. Eventually, the priests did leave; in our protection capacity, I went to the airport to see them off. It was an emotional scene with all their “brothers” at the airport. I think this particular episode did help us in establishing some credibility with both the Church and ironically, the military.

The new CG, a USAID officer, was Donor Lion. He was an interesting person. He is now retired. He and I saw the situation in the same way. From his background in development economics, he understood that political and economic growth go hand in hand. Title IX

of the Foreign Assistance Act had just been passed; it placed heavy emphasis on the desirability of political development, so that USAID missions were directed to include that goal as part of their programs. Donor Lion took this directive very seriously; that fitted well with my approach to political reporting which was closely linked to our economic development programs—education, public health, etc—which had a heavy social content. The Consul General saw the two main strains of development—political and economic—as closely linked. We got along well.

Lion's approach was not always appreciated by his superiors in Rio, both in the Embassy and the USAID mission. They were not very comfortable with the linkages. We were stressing. We were viewed as “renegades.” But we were not deterred, and my reporting emphasized the same issues as it always had. Our reporting would generally go to Rio first which would usually send it to Washington with the Embassy's comments attached. In some instances Brasilia and Recife agreed to disagree, which was fine.

I might just add a comment or two on our assistance programs in Northeast Brazil at this time. They did achieve some results—e.g. if the project was to build schools, they were built. Progress was less measurable when dealing with more amorphous endeavors such as “improving education” through text book reforms. Measuring impact on educational reform is much harder than dealing with bricks and mortar. The same could be said for the public health field which had projects in family planning for example. I think that we made a clear impact, but how it is measured is much more difficult.

Our assistance mission consisted at the time of almost 200 Americans. It was a substantial program. I think we may have overvalued the potential benefits of an American presence on economic development, but this was a heady period in our history when we believed that we could do almost everything, given good will and adequate resources. I think we perhaps over-reached.

I did attend some Embassy meetings, but my trips to Rio, where the Embassy was still located, were infrequent. When I did visit the Embassy, I would of course talk to anyone interested in our work. I was still a relatively junior officer, but a pretty active one. I think the Embassy took my views seriously, although perhaps having a “Northeast” perspective, which was not necessarily representative of the whole country.

Our military attach#s had traditionally been very close to the Brazilian military dating from our alliance of WWII during which Brazilian troops had fought alongside American units in Italy. Vernon Walters got his start being a liaison officer to the Brazilian forces. He was an attach# in Brazil subsequently. He was succeeded by Art Mora, who was able to maintain the same levels of access that Walters had developed. Art was the senior attach# when I was in Brazil. He was very sympathetic to the Brazilian military. I think it is fair to say that our military attach#s, the aid mission and the Economic Section were more forgiving of the Brazilian military regime on the grounds that economic development was essential in that country and had to precede any political opening. So they provided sympathetic understanding and were more pro-regime than those of us in Recife.

A lot of work has been done on looking at the social origins of the Brazilian military. The Brazilian elites traditionally have considered a military career for their male off-springs—not their daughters—to be a worthwhile goal. Over the years, a tradition of service grew up with sons of military officers following in their fathers' footsteps. The military set up its own secondary school system which was the path to the military academy. I don't think one can say that a military caste was being developed, but the officer corps was gradually becoming more insulated. It tended to be drawn from the southern part of Brazil—that was very noticeable in the Navy—but I think all services drew heavily on the South for its officer candidates. There were of course noticeable exceptions—some military leaders came from the Northeast—but by and large they were southern.

If you look at the disposition of the Army, it is notable even today that most of the units will be located on the Argentinian and Uruguayan borders. That has been traditional. That

reflects the historical concern of the Brazilian military—a perceived threat from Argentina. Recently, the two countries have made some progress in reducing this rivalry, but there is still a troublesome legacy of more than 100 years. The disposition of forces has reflected that concern.

The other foreign concerns tend to be secondary to the Argentinian rivalry. The Brazilians have periodically shown concern for other neighbors, but not with the intensity and persistence of the concern with Argentina. In the North, the terrain is such to provide a natural defensive barrier; the concern in that region revolved around sovereignty and the demarcation of borders. There are cross-border interlopers, but this is not a major threat. The Brazilian military presence in the North is intended to assure that Brazil's claims to territory are made good. The military is deployed throughout sparsely populated areas to defend these claims.

I must say that I have learned much more about Brazilian economic development after my tour than I knew while I was there initially. I think we need to remember that there are several Brazils. The farther south one goes, the more advanced and sophisticated and productive the economy is. Some states in the south are actually nation-size in the European sense. If they were independent nations, they would have the economic and social indices of a European country—or very nearly so—in most respects. Their per capita income is quite respectable; the literacy rate and life expectancy would be almost at a European level.

On the other hand, the Northeast had indices that placed in the Third World. So there are several Brazils. We knew it then—and that is still true today—as a country which had major disparity of incomes—great wealth and great poverty. But Brazil, unlike many other countries, is so large that it achieves critical mass in almost every field. So with the wide disparities, Brazil can still manufacture world class products in virtually all areas; it does educate enough of its people sufficiently to be able to compete in the world markets even

when hampered by the great differences in economic development among its various regions. And that is still true today.

These disparities did not engender the unity of the states, Brazil has a federated system, similar to the US, except that the states are much more autonomous than are ours. A Brazilian state has great control of its social and economic affairs. This is a reflection of a separatist tendency; Brazil has suffered through several insurrections as well as a civil war which brought Getulio Vargas to power in 1930; that was a war to prevent the south from seceding. By the time I served in Brazil, the separatist movement was pretty much in abeyance, although glimmers of such sentiments were still evident in the Northeast and in the South. The military was always worried about keeping the country together. The motto of the Brazilian Army emphasized the need for holding the country together; it was a central mission of the Army throughout its history, particularly after the 1930 civil war. It had put down separatist movements in the Northeast previously, but the potential of such movements was never far from the military's consciousness. That was one of the reasons for its concern about the activities of the Peasant Leagues which they believed might have moved in that direction.

Inflation at the time was being subdued. The military had excused its 1964 take-over by the need to tame run away inflation; so when inflation abated somewhat, the military could point to some success for their tight control of the economy and the political life of Brazil. But inflation, until recently at least, has been an albatross around the economy's neck; it was never really tamed until recently. It must be understood that inflation can be a plus for some segments of society because it in effect wipes out debt. Inflation, in theory at least, is a great leveler. In practice, it hurts those least able to support pain—the poor. Brazil managed to work out a modus vivendi with inflation. It indexed virtually all transactions, so that even with accelerating inflation, there is relative stability in the marketplace. Some economists thought that Brazil had found a way to coexist with inflation, but later events

indicated that this was not quite true. Inflation, even with indexation, still inflicts penalties on the economy and predictability exacts a very heavy expense.

Environmental concerns were very much in the background during my tour in Recife. The Amazon and its rich natural resources were not part of our consular district until almost at the end of the tour when Manaus was added to our district, but I don't remember any great concern at the time about environmental damage.

Recife was a large city with almost a million people in its metropolitan area. But it had the atmosphere of a small town. The Northeast tends to be very family oriented; people are very slow in accepting newcomers—in contrast to the openness that is the hallmark of Brazil. So we had some difficulties in making lasting friendships; it was done, but it was difficult in light of the social environment, which had very pronounced social positions and divisions. As diplomats we are usually ranked very high on the social ladder; that gave us good entre into official circles, but that did not easily translate into social access. We did belong to various clubs, but that did not necessarily translate into social access within the local community. But I need to say again that Brazilians in general—including those in the Northeast to some degree—are very open; a minimal effort by a foreigner will usually open doors.

My social activities in any case had to be circumscribed because we had small children at the time. Fortunately, in Recife at the time, parties or other social events tended to be over fairly early in the evening—that is not true today.

Q: You left Brazil in 1969 and went to the University of Wisconsin. How did that come about?

MELTON: By 1969, I had been in the Service for ten years, most of the time in Latin America. I strongly believed that it was time to do something else. I looked around; I applied for University training. That turned out to be area studies. I got a Master's Degree at the University of Wisconsin in Latin American studies in 1971. I must say that I resisted

entering this program to some extent believing that area concentration might end up restricting rather than broadening career prospects. In fact, I spent most of my time taking courses in political science and economics.

These were exciting times in Madison. The University of Wisconsin had a well deserved reputation for being a very liberal institution. The students were up in arms about Vietnam. The campus was quite lively. The atmosphere was one of definite skepticism and suspicion of the U.S. government and its policies; in some cases, there was outright hostility to people who may have had a connection with the government—people like myself were particularly suspect because we had a relationship with the foreign policy apparatus of the government. If we were not the enemy itself, we were certainly viewed by some as the unwitting pawns of the enemy.

Classes were often disrupted. That was a unique experience. I had attended what I considered a first rate academic institution—Cornell University—where the intellectual environment was stimulating and highly competitive. That was what I was accustomed to and what I expected to encounter in Madison. But instead I observed a sharp deterioration of the academic environment as professors were routinely shouted down and not allowed to teach. In some cases, the professors showed no disposition to teach; the faculty and the institution were bending under the pressures of the day—to put it diplomatically. The academic standards and the other attributes of a great university were seriously diminished. If I got past the initial skepticism generated by being a State Department employee, I was still regarded as part of the establishment that some were trying to bring down. If I could be seen as an individual instead of a caricature of a bureaucrat, then the atmosphere was more cordial—sometimes I even managed to get to a discussion of the issues.

I was in a graduate program together with a small group of students. Eventually, I think I got that group at least to get over its initial prejudices. So I didn't have any problems in the graduate classes I attended. However, in survey courses, or in larger campus activities

where I was viewed as a representative of the government and not as an individual, then the reaction was more hostile. It was during my year at Madison that the math building was partially destroyed by a bomb with one person killed and several injured. Fortunately, it occurred in the middle of the night; otherwise the casualties might have been far greater.

During the height of the disturbances, my seminars were routinely held at private homes to avoid the campus disruptions; the alternative often was not to hold class at all. The whole atmosphere was depressing; it was not a democratic environment. Ideas were not discussed; the day belonged to those who could shout the loudest. The authorities were not acting responsibly. If Madison had been representative of the whole American society, I would not have been very optimistic about the future. Fortunately, Madison was not the world. The 1960s and early 1970s passed and institutions survived. The system may have given a bit but did not break. It was never in serious danger. But the 1970-71 period was not conducive to education. I managed to learn a lot at Wisconsin, but much of it was extracurricular.

One of the explanations for the abdication of faculty responsibility was that many universities were undergoing a major internal reorganization—apart from the political issues. There was considerable debate about the number of professors needed to accomplish the university's goals. For example, one of my professors at Wisconsin, Thomas Skidmore—a preeminent expert on Brazil—had begun as a student of Russian studies at Harvard. He was told just as he was about to earn his Ph.D. that he had made a big mistake; he would have to change his specialty if he wanted an academic career because there was a huge surplus of Russian experts. If he stayed in that field he was not likely to obtain tenure, even if he were fortunate enough to find a job. So he switched to Brazilian studies.

There were other cases such as those of Skidmore; people who had graduated from good academic programs; they had been hired as junior faculty members, but their prospects for tenure and a career were not very good. So part of the campus unrest had to do with

the career concerns of the junior faculty. The senior faculty were unsure of their future for different reasons; the campus unrest was directed at established institutions, of which they were the controlling group. They therefore tended to bend to the pressures to preserve their position. So both the bottom and the top of the academic ladder were in a period of great uncertainty. Whatever the reason, I didn't find much courage in the faculty or administration at Wisconsin. The people responsible for the management of the institution did not try to maintain an academic atmosphere on the campus; they did not stand up and fight disruptive elements. More often, the institution's leadership was looking for ways to accommodate the rebels; it was looking for ways to be more “inclusive.” That was a good objective, but while ways were sought to pacify the students, reprehensible deeds were taking place which should not have been tolerated—but they were. The leadership has to live with the consequences of its inaction or accommodation. The student leaders on the other hand were very committed to the cause of the moment; time took care of most of the issues, and they became committed to other causes and many became quite successful in their after-student life. I think that much of their commitment at the time was misplaced.

The other factor that made Wisconsin the center of student anti-government rage was the University's deserved reputation for excellence in a number of fields. Much like Cornell, it was a combination of a state schools and private institutions which drew a considerable part of its student body from out of state. Normally, this diversity makes for a stimulating academic environment, but in the case of Wisconsin of 1970, it contributed to turbulence.

I took a lot of economic development courses because my Brazilian experience stimulated my curiosity about this process. Wisconsin has a very good Land Tenure Center which is associated with the School of Agriculture. It had a number of development and agricultural economists, as well as some very good political scientists, such as Charles Anderson; many of them worked on African issues. I took a regular graduate program in comparative political systems, which was a precursor for a Ph.D. program. I briefly considered seeking a leave of absence to complete the program, but decided instead on stopping

at the Master's level. I concentrated on comparative political systems and economic development.

I was sent to Wisconsin by the Department to pursue Latin American area studies and Latin America-Portugal. The subject was broad enough to allow considerable latitude in the studies. There were prerequisites to obtain a degree, and I fulfilled these requirements. I already met the language requirements; that helped. By taking the required courses, I was granted a Master's Degree in Iberian-American studies.

Q: You finished your tour in Wisconsin in 1971. What happened next?

MELTON: I was assigned to work in the policy office in the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs. That office was headed by Don Easum, who later became Assistant Secretary for African Affairs and had several ambassadorial appointments. He was from Madison, Wisconsin and visited the University while I was there. He interviewed me and offered me a job in his office.

All regional Bureaus had regional affairs or policy offices. They were intended to worry about issues that went beyond the jurisdiction of any single country office. In 1971, ARA was trying to establish an office that would link policy objectives with resource allocations. It had put together some people to try to establish such a system. One of the members of our team was a former Presidential management intern who had also been a city planner in Michigan. There were also other agency representatives on the team. The system we developed was called the Country Analysis and Strategy Program or CASP.

Our Assistant Secretary was first Charlie Meyer, followed by Jack Kubisch. Charlie Meyer had come from Sears and Roebuck, and had many contacts in the Latin America region. He was a delegator. Day-to-day direction of the bureau was left to his very strong deputy, John Crimmins. Crimmins, an outstanding officer in every respect, carried most of the planning and management workload.

When I joined the office CASP was still in its embryonic stages. My assignment was to work on CASP, which I did for most of my tour (three years) in the policy office. During Bill Crockett's era as Deputy Under Secretary for Management in the 1960s, the whole Department was experimenting with this concept. ARA had progressed farther than any of the other regional bureaus. But its advance in the effort to link resource allocations to policy were at best episodic; it had peaks and valleys. The 1960s efforts never really came to full fruition, but by 1970 the decision had been reached to try again. The Department gave this new effort support and encouraged the Bureau to move forward.

One of the differences between 1971 and earlier efforts was the support for this effort from other agencies. It was hoped that the new system would improve the interagency decision making process. This support gave ARA the hope of being able to include the resources of other agencies in the new planning system.

This was the time of “Twilight of the Tyrants”—Tad Shultz's book which tracked the changing political climate in Latin America. There were noticeable moves away from military dictatorships—Venezuela, Dominican Republic. Even in Nicaragua, where the Somozas still held sway, there were signs of political opening. The situation today is of course much freer than it was in the early 1970s, but progress was being made.

There were several assumptions behind the new policy planning effort. One of the major considerations was the fact that very large amounts of resources were flowing into the region, primarily under the Alliance of Progress through the Agency for International Development (USAID). The planning system we were developing would have amalgamated the systems that other agencies were using at the time, giving decision makers a single document that would cover all U.S. resources going into Latin America. The system was to be field-based—a very valid concept—under the authority of the ambassador, who was to develop an annual country plan. That plan was to be approved

by an interagency group, chaired by the Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs using an interagency process that had been blessed by the NSC.

We hoped to cover all U.S. government agencies, including CIA. That agency's program had been always dealt with separatively, but we were looking for ways to capture its efforts as well—or at least to increase the Assistant Secretary's oversight capabilities. It was and is true that the chief of mission had supervisory responsibility for all U.S. government field activities, but there were many activities that would escape an ambassador's oversight. We worked on ways that an assistant secretary could be given more effective oversight authority for these activities that might not have been directly linked to one country. At the time, more than now, there were some activities which were being deliberatively conducted by agencies other than the Department without policy oversight. To bring those activities under adequate supervision was an up-hill struggle; I think there was more interest and concern about this issue at the working level than there was at the senior levels—particularly among the non-career officials.

I spent most of my time looking at large users of resources—big programs. Those were areas of major concern to the US. There were some exceptions to that general rule, but the large programs did need the most work. This was the period when Fidel Castro was a major US concern; we also worried about communist or nationalistic movements which appeared to be leading countries toward the international communist movement. The countries which fell into this category were the ones of greatest concern to the US—some in Central America, the Caribbean, and Brazil from time to time (particularly the Northeast part of the country).

We had other concerns in the continent unrelated to the communist threat. These stemmed from some nationalistic tendencies which were perceived as threats to US interests—e.g. commercial. Besides outright expropriations, there were worries about the general climate for the free flow of goods, which had a defense implication because our defense concepts are based on the ability to move resources relatively unimpeded

from place to place particularly by air and through international waters. So we worried about tuna fishing off Ecuador and Peru which had implications for larger US concerns—territorial limits (12 miles or 200 miles)—which included defense interests.

As I suggested, the idea behind this interagency programming system was to first look at our goals and objectives in each of the Latin American countries. Then we examined what individual programs were trying to accomplish to ensure that each program or project was supporting one or more of our fundamental goals rather than an agency objective which might or might not be consistent with overall U.S. priorities in a given country. Where interagency cooperation was good and the Country Team leadership was strong, it was possible to link programs to US goals; where those factors did not exist, the linkage was difficult to evaluate. We instituted a country policy statement, written by the chief of mission and approved by Washington, providing the overall justification for the level of resources requested. Since almost all agencies worked from field developed budgets—much more than now when so many resources are earmarked by Washington—legislative and executive branches—and the use of funds is dictated from the top—it was much easier to look at the relationship of programs and projects to policy objectives in a country context.

By using that concept—field based initiative, and the authority of the chief of mission and the regional assistant secretary, who was the chairman of the interagency NSC working group—we believed then there would be a better chance of having an integrated and coherent approach in each country. If solid country programs could be developed, then there was a good chance that a coherent approach to the entire region could be achieved —with resources devoted to the highest US policy objectives.

We tried to develop a format which was detailed enough so that Washington could pass some judgement on the validity of the country team proposal to ensure that there was close relationship stated objectives and that activities proposed to advance those objectives. We first called for a country plan, to be approved by all agencies. The projects

and programs of all agencies were laid out in matrix form that one could readily see the relationship between the country policy objectives and specific agency programs and projects. The country submission started with a brief essay, outlining the country team's objectives—that is, the chief of mission's views on policy objectives to be pursued and a statement of strategy for the near term, as well as a statement of problems and barriers to achieving US policy objectives in that particular country.

The essay was accompanied by a plan, detailing goals and objectives—the difference being the time frame—goals were longer range and objectives were shorter run to be achieved in the one-year period under review. The need for these goals and objectives to be measurable was always stressed—all of the buzz words we talk about now were very much in vogue then. In some ways, we were more advanced then than we are now.

This interagency planning process was much further advanced in ARA than in any of the other regional bureaus. Our efforts have subsequently been the subject of several scholarly works on foreign affairs budgeting. It has been cited as one of the most ambitious efforts ever mounted to implement the basic concept.

My office in ARA was the manager of the process. The first submissions always came from the field, leaving much initiative to the chief of mission. Washington was a review level—for the policies and programs recommended by the field. While policy and resource constraints were established by Washington, we did not dictate the policies to the field.

During my tour in ARA, Allende was overthrown in Chile—1973. Some people in the bureau at the time—e.g. Harry Shlaudeman had been in Chile as DCM—when these events took place. He returned to Washington as a DAS in the Bureau. Since he was being considered for other senior positions, his work while in Chile was being scrutinized closely as was the whole Bureau's efforts on the Chile issues. Allende had been a major concern for ARA; the critical period came just prior to an election when Allende was to run again. The polls in Chile were quite clear that Allende would lose his bid for re-election.

That was one of the factors that was subsequently cited—and rightly so—to counter the contention that Allende's overthrow was a wholly US generated effort. The Chileans themselves—and of course the Chilean military—had had enough.

I must say that the planning job was less than satisfactory. It is true that we were involved in policy development and certainly in implementation, but I was discouraged by what I considered a lack of seriousness in the planning process; I thought the process had considerable potential and I believed the leadership of ARA and the Department should have given it more attention and support. Failures in this area continue to plague the Department to this day.

John Crimmins did see its advantages and, under his leadership, great strides were made towards getting a better fix on resource allocation across agency lines. But that was not a uniform view within the bureau, and when Kubisch took over, a lot of steam went out of the effort—it was back to “business as usual.” The process could raise the issues that needed to be resolved, but without front office determination to deal with the issues raised, the programming system just languished. So I left ARA with some sense of frustration; I thought that the process we had launched could have become a very useful management tool, but unfortunately, its potential was never exploited by either the bureau or the Department.

Q: You left ARA in 1975. What was your next assignment

MELTON: I went to Portugal. I had served in Latin America for practically my whole career. I thought it was time to move to another area of the world. I served in Portugal from 1975 to 1978.

Circumstances in Portugal were fortuitous. There had been a revolution in 1974 led by a group of young Army officers, disillusioned by there experiences fighting a losing colonial war in Africa. The Marxist were making major efforts to take over the new government. So I thought that the political situation looked very interesting. I spoke Portuguese, and

Portugal was not in Latin America. It all looked pretty attractive to me. So I inquired about upcoming vacancies; I was told the principal officer job at the Consulate General in Oporto might be available. Oporto was the major town in northern Portugal—a center of conservatism, and a potential counterweight to leftists in the south. I made a bid for that job. I thought I was a strong candidate; in fact, the job went to the staff assistant of the then Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs. The fix was in before I even had a chance to compete for the job. I was annoyed. I knew the new ambassador, Frank Carlucci—I met him when he and I were serving in Brazil. I called him and told him I was upset about the selection process, since I thought I was better qualified than the person who got the job. Frank remembered who I was, but confirmed that the Oporto position was a “done deal;” he did however mention that he was expanding the political section in Lisbon and suggested that I put my name forward for one of these positions. I did and was assigned to Lisbon.

Pre-revolutionary Portugal was an assignment that had been much sought after. If anything, there was even more after the revolution. This said, the quality of the people I encountered in the Embassy was mixed. The Portuguese political system had been very stable, but sign of change began to appear well before the revolution. But I did not think that our Embassy people had focused on this change—sufficiently at least. That was the major problem at the Embassy.

The issue in Portugal, which was mirrored in Spain, was the presence of an aging dictator. The question in such situation is always whether there is a transition in process or is power just being transferred to another dictator. In Portugal, it had been clear for some time that the regime was becoming fatigued and that Salazar's successors were having increasing difficulties holding the regime together. In retrospect, I don't think we saw this phenomenon early enough; therefore we were surprised when the change actually took place and Salazar's successors were unceremoniously thrown out.

The change was a problem for the Embassy which had very good contacts with the regime formerly in power and poor to non-existent contacts with the new people. Furthermore, the Embassy was viewed by the new crowd with some suspicion because of its intimacy with the old regime. In trying to deal with the political change and the new faces on the scene, the Embassy was hampered by all these challenges and could not do an effective job in representing the US. That led to a decision to turnover much of the Embassy's staff; Frank Carlucci was appointed as Ambassador and he brought in Herb Okun as DCM. In addition, the staff was almost completely changed and increased.

I did not perceive paranoia before leaving Washington, but once I got to Lisbon, I immediately got a feeling of desperation; i.e. that Portugal was being lost to NATO and turning toward the communists. That soon became the dominant view in Washington. This studied pessimism created problems for managing policy and relations because the tendency was to “write off” Portugal in part to “show the rest of Europe” what the consequences would be to lean toward communism. The assumption was that the leftist regime in Portugal would make such an economic mess that other countries, such as Italy, would be inoculated against communism; that is, would not be tempted to follow in Portugal's path.

One of the implications of that view touched on our air base in the Azores, which was at some distance—geographically as well as psychologically—from Lisbon. The activists among the Washington Nay-sayers assumed that the Azores had national separatist tendencies which could be fanned, thereby allowing us to keep our base there regardless of the events in Lisbon. There were even those who thought that Portugal might well come apart with the Azores or other parts of Portugal seeking independence.

If you didn't buy the view that Portugal was going communist and that that would be a good example for the rest of Europe, then one had a difficult challenge in viewing the situation positively. But there was another point of view—that, in time, became the Embassy view. Portugal was not “lost” but rather was going through a phase of political

development which need not result in a communist takeover. This interpretation was supported by the presence in Portugal of some dedicated proponents of democracy and the essentially conservative nature of the majority of the Portuguese population. This view held that eventually the democratic tendencies of the Portuguese would reassert themselves and therefore Portugal should not be “written off.”

It was these two perspectives which clashed in the development of US policy toward Portugal. Carlucci's view was that we should support the democrats and stick with Portugal, which would eventually become a respected member of the European community. The Embassy staff shared this issue.

The political split in Portugal in the mid-1970s was on the left of the spectrum since the right had essentially been so denigrated that it had little influence. The competition for power was essentially among three groups: the Socialist Party; the Communist Party; and the Armed Forces, at the time led by young officers of the Captain's Movement. I was assigned to cover the first group, the Socialists; I had some help but I was the main contact person. Gradually, I expanded my associations to include some members of the “Captain's Movement;” I developed some good contacts within that group. By the time my tour ended, I had been promoted to head of the Political Section, after initially serving as deputy.

The Embassy was filled with people who did not have much more experience in Portugal than I did. My job was to establish and maintain contact with the Socialist Party. I had never met a socialist party member before. I asked how I might go about doing this. I was told that as a political officer, I needed to figure this out for myself. No one else in the Embassy knew the Socialists either. So I found where the Party headquarters was and walked in. I learned about the Party structure. I went from individual to individual, expanding my—and the Embassy's—contacts with the Socialist Party. So I started from the bottom and worked my way up in the structure, which was not easy since we were viewed with great suspicion by Party members.

I don't want to overstress that suspicion; it did exist, but it was not uniformly held by all party members. There were elements within the Socialist Party that certainly did view us with antagonism. The Party had been in exile for many years; Mario Soares, the head of the Party at the time, had previously been a member of the Communist Party. So in Portugal we had the classic communist-socialist split; whether you were one or the other, depended in great part on non-political factors—family relationships, historical circumstances, etc. Gradually, before my arrival, however, it became clear who were the democrats and who were the authoritarians. The Socialists were the democrats. But there were still doctrinaire members of the Socialist Party who were much to the left than the party rank and file and more suspicious of the U.S. and the Embassy.

Fortunately, my first contacts were with people who were solidly in the democratic camp. In time I became acquainted with the more extreme elements. I found that slowly but surely I could build comfortable relationships with most elements of the Party, including doctrinaire leftists. I began with the International Division of the Party; that was the logical starting point for a foreigner. It was the Party's point of contact with embassies in Lisbon; they were used to dealing with diplomats.

Soares was largely unknown to us, despite his extensive political experience. Initially, people pointed to his communist background. There were questions about whether he was really a “democrat.” That skepticism was quickly resolved within the Embassy. His early actions clearly showed his inclinations; there was no question in our minds that he was a democrat. I don't know that Washington came to the same realization as quickly.

Getting to know other Party members was a greater challenge. I tried to expand relationship by relationship. Sometime I found it necessary to call on an official and introduce myself—explaining who I was, what my job was and why the relationship I was trying to establish was not part of a nefarious US plot but might well work to the advantage of all concerned. By and large, I think most people accepted this view, but there were some who continued to view all U.S. government activities with great suspicion,

which spilled over to me personally. In those situations, I would try to find an intermediary who would introduce or refer me to the skeptic; that would indicate that I was not a total stranger, but I was known to members of the Party. That worked pretty well; gradually, even that hostility which initially had existed, dissipated and people became sufficiently open.

As I said, most Party members were democrats; so that even if they had a bad experience with the U.S. or were just ideologically suspicious, we did have a shared view on a preferred political system; so if we could reach that common ground, a dialogue could be established. I must say that our then current foreign policy problems—particularly El Salvador—were great fodder for European socialists, including the Portuguese; they used to beat up on us for these "failings." The Portuguese socialists were part of the Western European movement; many of them had close contacts with fellow Party members in France, UK, Sweden, and other countries. Some financial support flowed from those countries to the Portuguese Socialist Party. The Socialist International was also active, and I came to know and respect the local SI representative, Berne Carlsson.

The Portuguese were and continue to be spread out all over Europe as "guest" workers. It is too often overlooked that when they work outside of Portugal, they are often in subordinate positions. So if you are an exiled Socialist Party leader or just a member, you may be welcomed by your "brother" in a foreign country, but it is not usually a comradeship of equals. The Portuguese were the foreigner and could never quite get across that hurdle. So often he or she would not take on entirely the views of the local Party. I developed relationships with Party members who had been in exile in the UK or Scandinavia; it was quite clear that their experiences were not uniformly positive; they were always in a subordinate position. Financially, many had to rely on the generosity of foreign party members; that too is sometimes hard to swallow.

Of course, the fact that there were many Portuguese who had emigrated to the U.S. helped in some ways. Many came from the Azores and ended up in Massachusetts. The

Portuguese communities in the U.S. often began as fishing communities on the East Coast or in San Diego. They were very independent—as most professional fishermen have to be. But some of those emigres suffered from a time warp. They viewed Portugal as they might have remembered it from many years earlier—before they emigrated. So their views of Portuguese society and politics were sometimes far out of date. For many, what was happening in Portugal was not in conformance with their views of how their country should behave. So some of these emigres responded by supporting separatist movements in the Azores as a way of putting pressure on the authorities in Lisbon.

Basically the support by the American Portuguese communities was rooted in their perceptions of what was going on in Portugal—perceptions which were not always accurate, in my judgement. It was the role of the Embassy to try to ensure that the U.S. government, and through it the Portuguese communities in the United States, had current and accurate information on political developments in Portugal. I think the Embassy did have differences with Washington on policy. Our perception of what was going on in Portugal, personified in Ambassador Carlucci's views and representations, was, as I suggested earlier, somewhat different from Washington. Ambassador Carlucci represented our views very effectively and I think, as subsequent events bore out, that he and the Embassy were right—Portugal did not “go down the drain,” but remained a steadfast member of the European democratic community.

I might here just make a comment on the management team. In Embassy Lisbon, Ambassador Carlucci worked through people and placed full confidence in his staff. He encouraged individuals to perform to their maximum capacity by giving staff members responsibility to do a job with minimal interference. That I think enhanced the performance of the Embassy staff. The DCM was much more a micro-manager—although he might not agree with my characterization. He wanted to put his stamp on each report or action. The high-level interest in the Embassy's work encouraged this approach. To his great credit, Ambassador Carlucci resisted this approach, and he, not the DCM, had the final word.

Ambassador Carlucci knew the DCM's strengths and weaknesses well; so the Embassy worked quite well, under two strong, but quite different senior officers.

I think the morale of the Embassy during this period was very high. In the first place we were on the front lines in a very unusual political situation which generated great controversy. In the second place, we had an Ambassador who carried considerable weight in Washington; he had been the Deputy Secretary at HEW before coming to Lisbon. His views could not be easily ignored or dismissed by Secretary of State Kissinger. All of the members of the staff had well defined areas of responsibilities; they were challenging because in part they were new—that is, the jobs had not existed before and many of us were therefore breaking new ground. We were establishing relationships that had never existed before. The stakes were high, and I think we all had a sense of being involved in significant issues. There was a pressure to produce and to make judgements which would be proven correct by subsequent events. Our reports had to reach conclusions; events were moving too rapidly; we had to make decisions then and there. Each event needed to be put in some broader framework and to state clearly the implications for the United States. Ambassador Carlucci was of course ultimately responsible for all of the judgements and conclusions, but we would put our views on each report. Carlucci would read some reports before they went out and some after the fact, but he saw everything. Occasionally he would ask a drafting officer what he or she was trying to say and how much confidence the reader should have in the conclusions reached. Sometimes, he would not find the evidence that conclusive; that would either force us to find more evidence or to modify our written conclusion to indicate some ambiguity in the evidence. But those were rare situations; in most cases he would agree with my conclusions—he of course had independent sources in the Socialist Party, including Party leader Mario Soares whom he saw frequently.

Many people said that the Portuguese government was run by Marxists. It was not that simple. In the first place, the government was controlled by the “Captains Movement”—the group of young officers that was formed through the African colonial wars. The term

“Captains” derived from the fact that this Movement was initially founded by small unit commanders fighting a guerrilla war—Captains would command company sized units. These individuals later coalesced into a political bloc, led by the Captains and a few more senior officers. In any case, the “Captains” became the prime movers behind the revolutionary government. They brought into the government some civilians, including some associated with the Communist Party. Prime Minister Vasco Gon#alves was not a Communist Party member, but the U.S. government was inclined to believe that if he walked like a communist, talked like a communist; he must be a communist or at the very least a tool of the communists. The question arose, “What was he?” He did appear to be a Marxist, and some leaped to that judgement, thereby also placing Portugal in the “lost” column.

The “Captains Movement” did not have a political base nor a party structure nor was it supported by all of the armed forces. So it was not likely to produce, on its own, a regime with much lasting power. Therefore the issue became which party would dominate the politics of Portugal as the Captains receded. That brought the Communists and Socialist into competition which manifested itself very soon after the system was opened up and people were allowed to participate through electoral politics. Both the communists and socialists quickly developed party structures which prepared them for the political competition.

The Communist Party was led by Alvaro Cunhal, who was Moscow-aligned, thoroughly orthodox and a hard liner. There was no significant Euro-communist wing within the Portuguese Communist Party, Cunhal moved in lock-step with Moscow. The members knew to follow the party line rigidly. In fact, that made our task somewhat easier; the communists were very rigid and were slow to react. On the other hand the socialists followed the democratic path of Mario Soares. There were some permutations, but by and large, it was Soares' views which held sway. By and large, that was the dichotomy in Portugal; the choice for the U.S. was easy.

The Soviets were very much involved in Portuguese politics. They tended to operate through surrogates—the East Germans, Cubans, Bulgarians, and others. The Soviet hand was quite noticeable even when the work was done through the surrogates. It was hard to deal with them because so many embassies representing “sovereign” powers were involved. There was a division of labor; some embassies were asked to do certain tasks by the Soviets and others were left to other missions. In our analysis of what the Soviets were doing, we had to keep in mind what all the surrogate embassies were doing.

It was difficult enough to establish contacts with the “Captains Movement.” We were not entirely popular with the armed forces because of our African policies. In addition, the captains and majors, when they decided to seize political power, had ruptured their ties to their own military establishment. The military also became divided in its views of what Portugal should do. The captains and majors were really uncertain of their roles or of the role of the armed forces; they were not all career military; many had been drafted into the officer corps because Portugal needed more manpower than its standing army could provide to fight the colonial wars. So many of the captains and majors entered the service when the armed forces had been greatly expanded, but were not really a part of the hard military cast. They were somewhat easier to approach than the more traditional military man who routinely reported every contact through the chain of command, to be told that the contact had been appropriate or not. With “civilian” captains and majors, there was much less stringent command and control. The government structure was not nearly as cohesive as it appeared from the outside. No one had actually made an effort to talk to junior officers; that gave me an advantage. Also they were age contemporaries of mine; that seemed to make it somewhat easier even though I have never found age to be a big factor in making contacts. With the captains and majors, I didn't have to have referrals. In fact, among the “Captains,” it would probably have been harmful if one tried to use one member to get introduction to others; more doors would have been closed that way.

Our own military did not have good contacts with the “Captains.” We had some effective attach#s, who did very good and essential work, but they were not very helpful to me in making contacts; I had to make my own. I found that the members of the “Captains Movement” were as interested in talking to us as we were with them. As I said, many were not professional military men; they were curious about the US. One of my first contacts was the spokesman for the Movement; he was interested in matters beyond the military. I told him that I was new on the scene, as he essentially was, and that we both might find occasional conversations to be useful to both of us. He agreed and that started a relationship that lasted for the rest of my tour in Portugal.

It was clear that the military, especially the Armed Forces Movement was a key player in Portuguese affairs. It was incumbent on me as well as my colleagues—and not just the attach#s—to develop contacts with these people; it really didn't make much difference who opened up the channels of communications; the important thing was that such channels were opened. Our attach#s were very good in discharging the duties for which they had been trained; they were not as good at opening dialogues for political purposes. Ironically, the attach#s were not comfortable dealing with people of authority outside the military command structure; for me, that came naturally. I used first of all to try to determine who was significant; secondly, I would see whether anyone in the Embassy was already in touch with those individuals; if the latter answer was negative, then I would try to establish such contact. Both in Brazil and Portugal with the socialists, I just knocked on likely doors; I frequently had no way to get “proper” introductions. I just presented myself and gave the best reasons that I could think of for the individual to talk to me. So Brazil was a good learning ground; I used some of the same techniques in Portugal, where at times, opening doors was more difficult because we were viewed by some with great suspicion and sometimes hostility—although I encountered some of the same skepticism in Brazil. I found that it was important on first meeting to start at the beginning; who I was, what and why the U.S. was interested in a specific subject—to take nothing for granted. There was

nothing mysterious about it, it was a straight forward and legitimate diplomatic function. It worked quite well.

Conversations always have two aspects. One is to determine the rationale used by your interlocutor on some subjects; that explains in part why certain things are happening. In the case of the Socialist Party, it was important to grasp what its goals were and how it expected to achieve them. That enabled us to better understand what was going on in Portugal at the time and what the prospects for success might have been. The other aspect was a presentation of the U.S. view on a subject—where it was appropriate for us to have views, which was true in more cases than people imagine. By expressing our views, we hope to influence the listener to be sympathetic to our preferences. At best, we could find common policy objectives; that would establish some sort of unity of purpose which is obviously a desired situation. So conversations did have an element of each side trying to convince the other on certain positions. In the end, it is important that diplomats make judgements, and it is fair to hold them accountable for those judgements. You are assigned to get it right; if you don't, you haven't done your job.

The European socialist parties were providing financial support to their Portuguese brother. This was provided bilaterally and through the Socialist International. At the time, the German contribution came in effect from tax revenues cycled through party institutions primarily in the Socialist Party. Each German party had an Institute or Foundation which was used to provide support to their foreign ideological allies. At the time, this was a major source of resources for all parties including the socialist. The communists relied on support from Moscow channeled through a variety of avenues. The Chinese were also active, but on a much smaller scale.

The democratic parties all had common objectives; a democratic regime in Portugal. That was our goal as well. Having said that, however, we had to admit that the socialist parties had their own agendas; there were tendencies in northern European parties which might have some things in common with southern European parties and some things on which

they differed markedly. Each might have their own preferences for a Portuguese Socialist Party structure or they each might have had different preferences for leadership. The Portuguese Party was run by a leadership elected in at annual conventions; the leader had to devote much time to building up constituencies which will support him. So when the vote is taken, the results are usually not a surprise. The inflow from foreign funds could be decisive in influencing the outcome of the annual convention, although few Socialists would like to admit it. The leaders also had the advantage of incumbency. The Portuguese Socialist Party cadres which returned from exile, included many people who were unknown quantities even among long-time party members. The track record of all leadership candidates had been interrupted by the exile; so an observer could not be fully confident of the position that any member of the Party might take once in power. So there was ample room for discussion and disagreement on the near term future of the Party and the direction it might take. There was a lot of discussion within and outside the Party about its future; so it was a very dynamic and effervescent period.

We were concerned that the single-minded dogmatic approach of the communist might win out over the squabbling, disputatious socialist. This challenge was certainly a serious concern for the socialists. But ironically, one of the advantages the Socialist Party had was it had in its senior leadership people who had come from the Communist Party—a Stalinist Party. These people were quite aware of the tactics and strategies that their former colleagues would follow and knew the strengths and weaknesses of the communists. They were just as energetic and purposeful as were the communists. Communists often have an advantage in that they controlled the streets. That was not true in Portugal. There the communist might bring out 50,000 people to demonstrate only to find that the socialists had mobilized 60,000 in another part of town; the socialists matched the communists at every juncture. They knew the communist tactics and managed to counter them and mount their own campaign in a democratic fashion.

The NATO connection was important because it was composed of democratic nations and held out the prospect of an EC connection and eventual membership in the European

communities. This democratic presumption was important for Portuguese political development. Had that connection been severed, Portugal might have been written out of the democratic club. As far as the Portuguese military was concerned, it was in a state of flux during this period. It did not stabilize until later when the whole Portuguese society came to a conclusion about its future. But even in this period of flux the NATO connection was important to the three elements of the Portuguese armed forces: Army, Air Force, and Navy. There was a NATO naval headquarters right outside of Lisbon—the Iberian Atlantic command. That was the source of some prestige for the Portuguese, particularly for the Navy. To have closed that down would have a serious negative implication and would have weakened the Portuguese democratic movement in its efforts to assert itself.

Eventually, it was the military that took the leadership in re-establishing democratic institutions in Portugal within the revolution. To have cut the NATO or EC connection, as some in Washington urged, would have made that task much more difficult.

I do not like to generalize, but I would have to say that Portuguese society was very conservative and traditional. The Armed Forces Movement superimposed on that society in 1974; it was a mismatch because the society and the Movement did not share common values. The majority of the Portuguese people live in the north—many in rural areas; the south was the base for the communists and the far left—as well as some of the industrial sections of Lisbon. So it was just a matter of time before Portuguese conservatism, centered in the North reasserted itself; it represented the majority. The communists under-played their hand. Perhaps they should have taken control in the 1974-75 period when they were at the zenith of their influence; their vote count was well above 20%. The communists did not take advantage of their temporary position and that, according to some, was a serious error in judgement. Time was not in their favor, and they missed their opportunity.

Long-time Spanish ruler Francisco Franco died while I was in Lisbon. People may not agree with my analysis, but I think it was fortunate that the transition to democracy and the

Iberian peninsula started in Portugal. The outcome in both countries was good. Spain had the advantage of having watched developments in Portugal; the Socialist Workers Party there benefitted from having its sister party in Portugal take the lead in bringing political openness to a country governed by a dictatorship. The Spaniards saw that democrats like Mario Soares and Felipe Gonzalez could be successful. I don't think that we should overstate the case—the Spaniards probably would not agree with this analysis—but I do believe that events in Portugal made it easier for Spain to build a democratic government after Franco's death. It certainly made events in Spain more palatable to Washington; we had seen that transitions were not necessarily damaging to our interests and therefore had greater tolerance for events in Spain. So I think what happened in Portugal may have been even more significant than it might have been otherwise; in the context of the times, even events in a small country could have wider ramifications, particularly when the transition was as successful as it was in Portugal.

I believe that the transition in Portugal was a significant success for American diplomacy. We had a new ambassador and a new staff which managed to change the views of a Secretary of State who was not known for his flexibility—or his optimism about Portugal. Henry Kissinger might have written Portugal off, but Ambassador Carlucci managed to hold the line and, in the final analysis, preserve Portugal for the western alliance. So this was an important period.

I look back on my Foreign Service career and consider the staff of Embassy Lisbon to have been among the best that I ever worked with. I think they were some of the top people in the Foreign Service. The Political Section had Charlie Thomas—later our Ambassador to Hungary and a negotiator in Bosnia; Joe Sullivan—until recently the head of our office in Havana; Mark Paris—our Ambassador to Turkey, at the time a relatively junior officer who had served in the Azores and was therefore a key member of the staff; Wes Eagan—now our Ambassador in Amman. So we had an outstanding group of officers who were highly motivated, able to start contacts from scratch, and eager to work.

Our desk in the Bureau of European Affairs dealt with us with a very light hand. I did not sense that it was either an obstacle or a great asset, either. The dialogue about Portuguese issues took place at higher levels. The Office Director, Bob Barbour, was experienced and wise, but I think the key issues were being tackled far above him.

As I said, this was a difficult and turbulent period in Lisbon. We had to lease our own quarters, which was difficult because the economy had been seriously disrupted—people taking over property. There were houses available, but we had to find them ourselves, which was alright, except that it was very time consuming. Many of those with property had abandoned the country; land invasions and property takeovers were widespread. The Embassy's administrative support infrastructure was inadequate to assist the expanded staff. There were some questions which in retrospect were probably more important than they seemed at the time. We didn't have any housing standards—what was an appropriate size residence; there were many landlords who were anxious to leave the country and were willing to rent their places to diplomats at a great discount. Many of these homes were palatial; under later housing standards, the question of appropriateness might well have been raised. I lived in a relatively modest place.

Portugal can be quite cold in the winter and most houses did not have central heating. That could be a real problem. My house was usually cold in winter. We did have some concerns for personal safety. I was considerably younger and probably wasn't as concerned as I should have been. But it was not my first tour and I had learned enough about self-preservation which stood me in good stead. We did have to be careful, particularly in crowds; violence was always a possibility—young people carried weapons even if they really didn't know how to use them nor were they particularly disciplined. Being stopped at road blocks by armed militia was not an unusual phenomenon; the fact that you might have been a diplomat cut little ice; we had to open the trunks of our cars just like every one else, following instructions given by a teenager with an automatic weapon. It

was particularly uncomfortable to families who might be stopped while driving. In general, it was a very hard tour for families who often took second place to workplace demands.

Periodically, the topic of US policy in Africa would arise in my conversations with my Portuguese friends. This was the period of heavy Cuban involvement in Africa. We knew about Cuban troop movements in Angola. We were involved on the periphery in Portuguese efforts to disengage from Angola and Mozambique without allowing Marxists to take control. We were not central to this discussion because the Portuguese had in effect washed their hands of their former colonies, although there were still strong connections between some Portuguese leaders and political parties in the former colonies. So at the edges we tried to play a helpful role, but I don't think we were particularly significant or successful. The issues, by this time, were beyond our control.

By the time I departed Portugal in 1978, I left a country very much on the rise. The power had shifted; an elected President, General Eanes, a relatively young senior officer who reflected the mainstream views of the military, was the head of government. The Socialist Party had won the general elections; Soares had served as Prime Minister. The Social Democrats had also won an election. That demonstrated that democratic principles were well in place and that the electorate had a wide choice from democratically-oriented political parties. This new atmosphere was proof of the successful transition that Portugal had passed through and gave observers solid reasons to expect a continuation of democratic practices in that country. The negotiations for entry into the EC were well underway and although the formal entrance was still distant because of economic aspects that had to be changed to meet EC standards, it was clear that Portugal would eventually enter the community because it had the will to do so and because it now met democratic standards of that group.

Q: You left Portugal in 1978 and went to the National War College.

MELTON: That is right. I had a very interesting year. Our military, even five years after our exodus from Vietnam, was still traumatized by that experience. In 1978, it was still in a state of denial. For example, our curriculum did not have any mention of Vietnam at all—as if it didn't happen. We covered Europe, we covered World War II and even the Civil War. Very little was said about Vietnam although almost all of my military classmates had participated.

The War College is always going through re-evaluations of its academic program and curriculum. During the year I was there, it was going through one of these periodic appraisals. The principal questions—then and I suspect always—was: Is the War College an academic institution or is it something else? What justifies its existence? By this time, a self-evaluation had been completed and had concluded that the curriculum had to be more rigorous. I think that was probably a good idea. This conclusion was implemented in part by the introduction of a Master's program and a core curriculum to be followed by all students at the War College and its sister institution, the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. At the same time, more flexibility was provided in choosing courses. Units could be taken at either institution; we had a lot of leeway in what we chose to study—and that was good.

I found that new flexibility very useful. The War College had a decent library and some good people on the faculty. I hooked up with one of those professors and did a lot of independent reading in addition to taking offered courses. I took one in quantitative methodology and others that interested me. Frankly, I took more courses at the Industrial College which tended to be more progressive, than I did at the War College. My general studies did not really have any concentration. We did have to write several papers. I found the independent reading of greatest value; there I concentrated on various concepts of political theory, methods for analyzing the macro content of political societies—in general, trying to update my education on subjects that I had last studied at university.

I did form some impressions about our military services views of the War College—and military education in general. The service which placed the greatest emphasis on continuing education seemed to be the Air Force. Their officers seemed to be of the highest quality; my view of the Air Force was reinforced by my conversations with officers from that service about their careers. It was clear that the Air Force put greater emphasis on continuing education than the other services. Next came the Army, the Marines, trailed by the Navy which appeared to place no emphasis at all on continuing education—certainly not on attendance at the War College or the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. The quality of the Navy students reflected that lack of interest.

I was reminded of the time I had spent years earlier with a Congressman under the Congressional Fellowship Program. I participated in the screening of applicants for the military service academies. One of the requirements was to take the SAT (the Scholastic Aptitude Test). We had some other ways as well to rank the applicants. The services were happy to do the initial screening for the Congressman; that was done, but the final selection was left to the principal. This process gave some assurance that the successful candidates were at least minimally qualified and would be accepted by academies.

I learned at the time what the academic levels were for each academy and the highest test scores went to the Air Force Academy—especially for math and sciences.

Q: Then in 1979, what was your next assignment?

MELTON: One of the problems the Department had—and has today—is to find assignments which make sense in terms of the academic training an officer may just have received. In most cases there was and is no plan for the next assignment for an officer assigned to senior training. So in 1979, the Foreign Service students at the War College—about 15—met with the Director General toward the end of our academic year. There were no plans for onward assignments. Those in senior training outside the Department were at a competitive disadvantage for assignments. You tend to lose contact with the Department

if you are not there every day. So as we neared the end of our study period, most of us did not have onward assignments. The Director General did not help despite a huge amount of hand wringing. In the end, the system worked as it always does; the officer had to find his or her own assignment.

That I did and I knocked on doors. I had pretty much decided that I would like to try Latin America again. Because of my prior assignment, that was the most likely area for a responsible job. I met with Bob Sayre, at the time our Ambassador in Brazil. Although my personal grade was below that of the position, I convinced Sayre that I should be his Political Counselor. At just about that time, I got a very welcome call from a friend in London, who said that although my previous attempt to get a job there hadn't worked, it might now. He wanted to know whether I was still interested in a job in the Political Section. I said, “Sure.”

A few days later, I received a call from Kingston Brewster, our Ambassador to the Court of St. James, asking me whether I was interested in a job in his Political Section. My answer was the same; “Sure.” And off to London I went where I worked for three years. I chose London over Brasilia—even though it was a lower graded position—because the bulk of my career still had been in Latin America. I continued to believe that I needed to become more familiar with—at least another area of the world—I suppose this view was reinforced by my experience at the War College. London was a great opportunity to get an additional perspective—not to mention all of the advantages of living in London.

When I arrived, my job was deputy in the Political Section. It was a large section with about ten officers. My responsibilities, in addition to the management of the Section, included coverage of the Labor Party and Latin American issues as they concerned the British. I had been recruited for that job specifically, in part because of my work in Portugal with the socialists there. I also had some familiarity with defense issues as well as the general spectrum of political work. The Embassy was very selective about its staff. It could afford to be. It tried as best it could to match the work to the talents and

experiences of the new arrivals. It actively recruited whenever vacancies occurred and tried to find the right person for every upcoming vacancy. London had great advantages, it could offer a living and working environment which could not be matched by most other embassies. And as good officers went there, that attracted other good officers to bid on assignments to London. In the late 1970s, London was riding a pretty good wave. The Political Section was formidable—Tom Simons, now our Ambassador to Pakistan, was the Political Counselor; Jack Binns, whom I replaced, became our Ambassador to Honduras; Jim Dobbins, who became our Ambassador to the OECD and is now in the NSC, was there; Brunson McKinley, who later became our Ambassador to Haiti, was there; Peter Sommer, who was a DoD civilian, later became our Ambassador to Malta; Gib Lanpher became our Ambassador to Zimbabwe, covered Africa; April Glaspie, later Ambassador to Iraq, covered the Middle East. So we had a pretty impressive group of people.

The political situation in the UK had changed considerably from the days when a Labor government—Jim Callaghan—had been in power. Now the Tories, in the person of Margaret Thatcher, were in charge. The expectations were that Labor would take control again—probably relatively soon. The last election had been close. The sentiment for unilateral disarmament was strong and growing and that was Labor's issue. The basing of cruise missiles in Europe was coming to a head with the UK being one of the countries in which this would be based. In order for the program to go forward—and it was one of the cornerstones of the defense strategy—required a critical mass of European participation with the UK being a pivotal country.

There was some concern in the Embassy that a future Labor government might well withdraw its support for the basing of US intermediate range missiles, under NATO, on British soil. The party remained divided on the issue. There was a strong unilateral and pacifist sentiment among party cadres. However, David Steele, who later defected from the Labor Party to form the Social Democrats Party, was the defense spokesman, and he

certainly did not favor unilateral disarmament. But there were many in the Party who were, particularly the left wing which was strongly linked to the labor unions.

The domestic debate on this issue really revolved around the basing of the ground-launched cruise missiles and the question of whether to proceed with a new generation of the British independent nuclear weapon capability—a submarine system and a missile capability. There were also questions about the basing of US nuclear capable submarines. So the general debate about the UK's position on defense strategy was very important to us; we had a large stake in the outcome. The debate within the Labor Party was very vigorous and made my job most interesting. One of my assignments was to make sure that the Labor Party understood our position on defense issues, not only to try to explain our policies but also to expose Labor MPs more broadly to defense issues, which can be very intricate and complex.

My approach was mainly through individual members of Parliament. I would see them privately; I would attend Labor Party conventions. I developed many personal relationships with individual Labor MPs. During my tour, I think I had contact with almost every Labor MP and established personal relationships with many. I tried to put some of them in touch with other members of our Embassy and introduced some to officials of our government including visiting Congressmen. This was intended to expose those MPs to a wider cross section of views, many of which were shared by our people—as a government we are far from monolithic. That was fine.

Some observers might question the need for such a large Political Section for a friendly country, completely democratic and open with a free and unfettered press. That debate was going on when I was in London and persists today. The question is whether with CNN and other media outlets so active, is all the diplomatic reporting required? In some respects, this question misses the mark because the Political Section in London was not simply a reporting unit, it was very much policy oriented, focusing on areas of US concern across the board. London, like all of our major posts—Paris, Bonn, Rome, Tokyo—have

a much larger function than the conduct of bilateral relations. They devote much time to tracking and exploring what is going on in their host countries on issues of vital concern to our government. An indication of that was the staffing of the London Political Section which had, for example, an African expert—this was the time of the Lancaster House discussions on the future of Rhodesia, soon to become Zimbabwe. Latin America was of some importance at the time, with Grenada, a former British possession, heating up. Most of the leaders in Grenada had been educated in the UK, giving that island continuing ties to Great Britain. The Middle East has always ranked very high on the British foreign policy agenda as well as ours; many meetings on issues in that region took place in London. We had a Middle East expert in the Section as well.

We did have bilateral issues of importance—on the European Community for example where the British then and now have a continuing debate internally on the degree and depth of their association with Europe will be. They still have more of the same reservations today than they had in my time. The Bank of England played a heavy role in financial circles—even more then than today. So we had a broad range of issues that had to be discussed with the British. If the London Political Section was doing its job well, it was covering all of those issues of vital importance to the US.

There are of course many other means of communications between the two governments besides communication through diplomatic establishments. But these means are not really a substitute for direct, continuing contacts between representatives of the two governments. A staff living locally is better able to report continually on issues of interest, can prepare for visits to ensure they are as useful as possible and can integrate specific events or issues into the larger context of our relationship and interests. An embassy is in a very good position to pull these various aspects together into a more meaningful over-all picture in part because very often the same people in the government or in Parliament are involved in many of these issues as well.

Let me mention briefly some of my reactions to the Labor Party. Some people have viewed its members as a collection of trade unionists and leftists, all joining together to sing “The Red Flag Forever,” viscerally responding negatively to anything that smacked of a free market economy—and America—holding an affinity for collectivist government. That is a caricature and an unfair characterization. There were some people in the Labor Party that might be described that way, but the Party represented a broad spectrum of British society. On the far left, it included the “Tribune Group” and people like Arthur Scargill—the head of the mine workers—and others who were certainly anti free enterprise and sympathetic to the communists. At the same time, there were many others—the vast majority—who were much more balanced in their views.

The Labor Party originated when an ideological split occurred in the orthodox socialist and Marxist parties. The hope was that this new party would be able to achieve a socialist society—balancing individualism and communitarianism—through democratic means. There were many philosophical strains represented in the British Labor Party; but support for democracy was the thread which held them together. There were some authoritarian views expressed while I followed the Party; a major issue was whether the Party should remain the voice and instrument of the trade union movement or whether it should strive to be something larger. Increasingly, economic development and political necessities answered that question; the Labor Party, to return to power, would have to have a broader constituency than the trade union movement. The British unions, as their American counterparts, have declined in membership. A party that was an exclusive trade union party would not have prospered at the polls; that was the key factor which eventually drove the Labor Party to seek a truly national constituency.

It was apparent then, and became clearer subsequently, that the Labor Party could not afford to remain in lock-step with the big unions. The people who had dominated the Party—and perhaps even a majority of the members—really didn't want to change to a broad-based institution. They preferred to control the Party—even if small—rather than giving

up some of their powers and beliefs in the competitive process of competing for national leadership. That was the essence of the debate.

As I mentioned, there were a few left wing militant members of the Party who were essentially authoritarian—the “Tribune Group.” They considered themselves to be a vanguard group within the Labor Party and British society; they would lead their “brothers” to the promised land. They envisioned the UK becoming a Marxist society. I talked to them often and even debated them. I became fairly well known among the Labor Party members; so I would often be singled out when I attended Labor gatherings. Arthur Scargill, a former communist, engaged me on several occasions in open debate about such things as US visa issuance policies—he was on the “watch list,” and could only come to the U.S. with a waiver. He resented this, and would periodically raise it publicly as an example of US intolerance; I would be called on to refute his allegations.

I also covered the Socialist International. Its executive secretary, Brent Carlsson, was based in London. That was an additional responsibility which at times was quite time consuming. Carlsson was Swedish. The International and others were becoming more active in Central America and were serious critics of US policy. One of its vice-presidents was Salvadoran; he also resided in London. The Labor Party also became interested in Central America. That became a time consuming brief.

The Soviet Union invasion of Afghanistan called into question some of the genuflecting responses of Labor's left. They eventually came up with a new rationale: all super-powers were the same—we were all imperialists who acted the same way—”a plague on all of you.”

While I was in London, Anastasio Somoza was deposed by the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. There was an affinity between the Sandinistas and the socialists. I would go to the annual Labor Party conferences, which were major political events, as were the conventions of the other British parties. The most interesting aspects of these conferences were not

the speeches and activities on the floor, but the side events. Groups would reserve hotel rooms and lobby the delegates to support their points of view. They would invite delegates and observers and the public, to meetings outside the conference hall. I would go from meeting to meeting listening to all possible views. The Central American faction—including the Sandinistas and various groups on the left—would hold forth. Sandinista leaders as well as people from Grenada, Salvador, and Guatemala were all there. There were groups at these conferences from all parts of the world. It was quite interesting.

There was some concern in the Embassy about the future directions of the UK. Devolution was a subject of major public debate as were the various economic difficulties that the UK was facing. The issue of Northern Ireland was very much alive as it is today. Scottish nationalism raised its head periodically. The United Kingdom at times did not seem to be very united. The independence of Wales was less of a factor, in part because that part of the UK was well represented in the upper councils of the Labor Party—Party leader Michael Foote and his heir apparent Neil Kinnock. The Scots were also well represented within the Party, but pro-independence sentiment was prospering—to a large extent, at the expense of the Labor Party. In fact, the Scottish Nationalist Party was largely formed by defectors from the British Labor Party. The England-based Conservative Party majority in the House of Commons was mirrored by a solid majority of the Labor Party in both Scotland and Wales.

As I said, there was vigorous debate in Great Britain about the economic direction of the country. The conservative view was quite clear: the previous Labor Government was responsible for the drag on the economy; there needed to be a significant re-direction of the economy which would undoubtedly entail much pain for the people. While I was there, the unemployment rate was growing, running counter to the traditional trends in Europe where the consequences of unemployment in any case were cushioned by a large social net and extensive welfare programs. The question of who would pay for these programs was very much on people's minds.

The Conservative Party was achieving some success in its efforts to reorient the economy. It was clear that the majority of Britishers supported its policies. Many of the Conservative views coincided with those of our government while Labor policies on such issues as defense were quite different. The Embassy held that there were no fundamental issues that divided the U.S. from either the Labor or Liberal Parties. They were democratic parties and the differences between us were clearly within acceptable limits.

I think I mentioned that Kingman Brewster was our Ambassador during most of my assignment in London. He was an impressive man. He relied heavily on his DCM, Ed Streator, and his staff. Ed managed the Embassy and did most of the recruiting. Brewster had excellent relations with the top levels of the British government and other parts of society. He made real efforts to establish a dialogue with the Labor Party—a classical Liberal, he had an affinity for many of the policies espoused by the Labor Party—except for unilateralism and some other defense related issues. He had been shaped by WWII and strongly supported a united Europe. He believed that the close relationship between the UK and the U.S. and between the U.S. and Europe was and should remain—the foundation of US policy. He very much supported the solidarity of the Western alliance, which he hoped to reinvigorate. He was convinced that “right reason” would prevail if the story could only be disseminated; given the facts, people would rally around this concept of unity. He was often perplexed that right reason was not adequately disseminated or did not prevail—particularly with the Labor left.

Northern Ireland was on our agenda. We continued to do the things that we had done consistently. We were looking for the solutions to this very vexing problem—a sectarian dispute that had defied reason. There had been so much blood spilled and so much history had flowed among the protagonists that the dispute seemed irreconcilable. Although I didn't have direct responsibility for the Northern Ireland, I did talk to people who were following the issue closely. They were frustrated; it seemed so intractable. The British seemed committed to finding a way out; many distinguished people had literally given their

lives to trying to find a solution. Hundreds of people were being killed each year, either by bombs or shootings or other terrorist acts—in Great Britain and in Northern Ireland. Some people would shake their heads and decry the deaths, but would maintain that a solution imposed on the parties would only result in open civil war with the loss of many, many more lives. So the loss of life then occurring, according to this point of view, was still at a relatively low level and in light of the alternative, still acceptable. I didn't necessarily agree with this view, but it was frequently expressed.

Nevertheless, there were significant efforts made to find solutions. One suggestion was to try to dangle an economic incentive before the combatants, giving all the protagonists an opportunity to improve their standards of living if they could find a political settlement—something akin to what today are known as “enterprise zones” where US manufacturers and others would invest in Northern Ireland in return for tax breaks and other official inducements. The sectarian nature of the struggle was reflected in the work place. They would be either all Catholic or all Protestant. Since the government in Belfast was controlled by the Protestant majority, most of the work places were similarly controlled. It was very hard to find political accommodations when every aspect of daily life is compartmentalized along sectarian lines, which reinforced division rather than building bridges of understanding. So while many were actively looking for solutions, progress was glacial.

I was in London when administrations changed in Washington. There were a number of people in the UK—particularly those on the left—who viewed President Reagan through the prism of his movies and thought of him as something of a “right wing kook.” But many Britishers, accustomed to civil service governance as well as the prominent role played by graduates of “public” schools, viewed events in the U.S. as the natural result of the management of affairs by the “ruling” class. So whatever they thought about Ronald Reagan, they were more interested in determining who in the U.S. was responsible for policy initiatives. If those people were thought to be competent, then the British were reassured—regardless of who occupied the White House. I think that view was probably

more prevalent in the Conservative Party, partly because they were the government and Labor was the opposition. Our role was mainly to explain policies, and not to probe the predilections of individuals within the U.S. government. We might hear criticisms of a particular policy and then perhaps a condemnation of the President, but the first focus was on the policy not the chief executive. I did establish a fruitful, if at times frustrating, dialogue with Labor members on the policies of the new administration; they were often critical, whether it was Grenada, Central America, or defense questions.

Grenada was an interesting issue because the island was in an area in which the British had an interest and knew something about. They had strong diplomatic, cultural, and political ties in the region. We attempted to work closely with the British as the situation evolved. Early on, we formed consultative groups. A number of senior Washington officials were named to coordinate with the British—most prominent among them was Phil Habib, who came to London to conduct periodic discussions. Since I was the Embassy's “expert” on Latin America, I participated in those discussions and generally provided staff support to Ambassador Habib. We were trying to coordinate our view points; we and the British were not entirely on the same wave length. The British were reluctant to become over-involved. Many of the Grenada leaders had been British educated. Grenada's High Commissioner-designate (Ambassador) to the UK was a resident solicitor, and the British were reluctant to accredit him, but eventually did so. The British view was that the situation in Grenada, after the mini-revolution, though distasteful, would just have to be accepted. Our view was that the situation in Grenada was serious and that more forceful response was called for to protect the region against Cuban-supported subversion or worse from Grenada. The British were much more passive, assuming that this problem would eventually dissipate.

I had developed a fairly close relationship with the new Grenada High Commissioner through Labor Party associations. He was an engaging personality. He would try to convince me of the error of our ways, and I would try to convince him that he was serving bad masters. I would report our conversations to Washington—he knew that I was doing

that and was probably the reason he talked to me. As events unfolded, he conveyed a sense of disagreement and disillusion among his country's leaders. I reported what he said, but I had the feeling that Washington was not listening. Apparently, Washington had made up its mind about what had to be done in Grenada; signs of flexibility in the New Jewel Movement were not in the script. So my reports may not have been welcomed by all.

There was little enthusiasm in Labor circles for our military actions. Grenada was a tiny speck and did not attract much British interest, particularly after the invasion which took place without British participation. We had been in touch with the British High Commissioner in Grenada who was a distinguished figure in his own right. He had certain residual authority and when our military went in, he had some residual legal authorities by virtue of his position to make decisions without reference to other authority. Therefore he was a protagonist of some significance when we landed. Before then, we had warned him that the situation of the American students—about 600—at the Grenada medical school was becoming untenable.

The British understood our concern about Grenada, but many Foreign Officers had some misgivings, particularly since we had moved forward in concert with East Caribbean governments and not with the UK. Some of the people involved had prickly personalities. For example, in the Foreign Office, Latin America was the responsibility of a senior Tory MP, who was later sacked following some intemperate remarks about Europe and Germans in particular. He was close to Margaret Thatcher. This gentleman was prone to state his views in an off-the-cuff manner, with considerable bite. He was not enthralled by our actions in Grenada—as he told me several times in his own inimitable fashion. So I had considerable fence-mending to do in the Foreign Office after the Grenada passions had died down.

During my tour, we had a change in ambassadors. John Lewis followed Kingman Brewster. Lewis had very limited experience in foreign affairs. Brewster had been

a distinguished public figure as the President of Yale University with long standing connections with the UK and with Europe—from his days working with the Marshall Plan. John Lewis had no such background; he came from the family that owned and ran the Johnson Wax Company. He was a nice man, but did not cover himself with glory as ambassador. The British establishment has a way of destroying people; they did a pretty good job on Lewis. I think if the truth be known, that “inner circle” had a role in the Ambassador's early replacement. They wanted someone of substance and someone who had the President's ear. They became convinced that Lewis was a lightweight with little access to the Oval Office—and therefore wanted another ambassador.

Lewis' early departure was precipitated by the Falklands War. He was on vacation in the U.S. when Argentina and the UK came to blows over the islands. I was told that he called the Embassy and said that he had read about events and wondered whether he should return to London. The Charge told him that everything was under control and that there was no need to cut short his vacation. So he didn't and soon thereafter was replaced—a victim of inexperience and bad advice.

The Falklands episode was a very difficult period for us. The Foreign Office initially was not on top of events, just as the British government was not. So as the situation evolved, there was a lot of embarrassment. The early stages were characterized by an atmosphere of recrimination which was just below the surface of relationships. Some wondered how the whole incident got started—the signs were misread by the British, and the situation threatened to immobilize by mounting recriminations. As matters evolved and the situation became a military problem, the tendency to worry about who was at fault dissipated; that was very fortunate for the British officials responsible for management of Falklands' policy. The Foreign Secretary resigned, although he was not directly responsible for the miscalculation of Argentine intent. He took the blame because that was what was expected of senior officials under the British form of government—if there is a major problem, the Cabinet officer presumably responsible takes the fall, whether or not he or she had anything to do with that problem. In this case, the Foreign Secretary was broadly

applauded for his action; I think it would be interesting if that pattern of behavior were followed in Washington; would be refreshing—but it would never happen in the US.

Latin America was my area of responsibility although it was not my major responsibility. So I followed the Falklands story. One of the British decisions that might have encouraged Argentine miscalculation was to change the schedule for their supply ships calling at the islands. This was misread in Buenos Aires as a signal that the UK was not prepared to defend its interests in the Falklands. The Argentine government was thereby encouraged to believe it could act with impunity. The British Foreign Office could have been seriously criticized for going along with this rescheduling. I reported this but never got any reaction from Washington. I left London before the outbreak of hostility and followed events from my next post in Uruguay where the Falklands were also an issue.

Q: You left London in 1982 and were assigned to Uruguay as DCM. You served there for three years. So you arrived in Montevideo at the height of the Falkland/Malvinas dispute.

MELTON: Right. Uruguay is a very small country—3 million plus inhabitants. It has a livestock-based economy. It has a very close relationship—love/hate—with Argentina. Uruguay was created as a buffer state out of the rivalry between Brazil and Argentina which continues. Uruguay's affinity was much more with Argentina, but this relationship is always on a roller-coaster.

The Argentine Ambassador, representing a military dictatorship, was an admiral, notorious for his authoritarian outspoken demeanor. He had a single view of the Falklands dispute —that of the military regime. He was prepared to regale one and all with his views at diplomatic receptions given the slightest opportunity. He also had very negative views of the US, which he also used to express to any one who would listen.

My Ambassador was Tom Aranda, a non-career official, who had been on the White House political staff. He was a lawyer from Arizona who had been active in politics there. He spoke fluent Spanish and had some connections with Mexico. His principal asset was

good Spanish; when his capabilities were tested, he scored 5/4+; he was incensed that he did not also score 5 in reading comprehension. In any case, he had strong views on all subjects. He also had a short-term photographic memory; he could look at several pages for a few minutes and then repeat virtually verbatim all that he had read. That was very useful in using talking points for meetings or public appearances; you could be sure that he would deliver them down to the last period.

I think the reason I got the DCM job was because of the transition that was taking place at the time in Uruguay's political world—from military rule to a more democratic regime. My background in London on the Falklands issue made me somewhat suspect, but on balance was a plus. Uruguay at the time was in the final stage of preparing for an election which would return a civilian-led democratic government following the era of Tupamaro violence and military governments—bad times. I had some experience in countries going through transitions—Portugal and the Dominican Republic, to some extent, and this I suspect counted with those making the selection.

One of my main challenges in the Embassy turned out to be internal management. It was a heavy burden. The Ambassador was not the easiest person to work with and his relationships with the national employees was often strained. Later, as a member of the Inspection Corps, I learned more about such problems—managing overseas establishments, the role of the chief of mission, morale questions and their relationship to the effectiveness of a mission. So my Uruguay experience turned out to be quite valuable in my subsequent work as an inspector. But it was experience that was hard won.

In Uruguay, the national employees had a difficult time adjusting to the new Ambassador as did the Ambassador in becoming accustomed to a different work environment from the one to which he was accustomed. An embassy is highly structured with agency representatives working with an established cadre of national employees who provide continuity and expertise in specialized areas. These employees are valuable assets;

the idea is to get all elements of the mission, including the national employees, to work together in pursuit of US objectives. Generally, that happens but it is by no means a given.

Another way of looking at national employees—a perverse view—is to see them as somehow the authority of the chief of mission. People who represent continuity, according to this view, tend to see continuity in terms of rules and procedures and previous patterns of behavior. New people coming in who want to establish their authority, particularly if they come from an environment where personal loyalty is a primary virtue and perhaps more important than established patterns, can feel challenged by people who assert the dominance of rules and precedent over personal authority. That happened in Uruguay and was one of the core issues that raised tensions between the Ambassador and the local employees.

The same problem, but to a lesser extent, clouded relationships between the agency representatives and the chief of mission. Agency heads have some authority, but clearly the chief of mission has overall authority. Normally, a mission operates most effectively when agency representatives and the chief of mission have an understanding arrived at through discussion and a deliberative process in which all accept that the ambassador has ultimate responsibility for operations of the mission; it is important that the sections chiefs and the ambassador have a mutual respect. This makes for the most effective missions. Unfortunately this environment did not always exist in Uruguay.

The role of the DCM in situation of tensions between the ambassador and the embassy staff, both American and national, is a delicate one. The DCM attempts to bridge the differences and keep the mission moving forward in the most efficient manner possible in pursuit of US objectives. Generally speaking, I think I managed to do that, although there were some tense moments when personality clashes and egos threatened the accomplishments of the mission's objectives. Most of these conflicts were kept within bounds, but it was an educational experience; it was tough, but very worthwhile.

Through it all, my relations with the Ambassador were generally good. He had little confidence in the “bureaucracy.” He viewed loyalties as personal—i.e. to him. I am not sure that he would agree with this characterization, but I think this tendency was one of the real problems. He agreed to my assignment, based on the strong support I received from the senior Deputy Assistant Secretary in ARA, with whom I had worked with in London. Ambassador Aranda probably would have preferred someone he selected, who would be personally loyal to him. So there was some initial tension, in general, the Ambassador viewed all staff members in that light—that is unless they owed some personal loyalty and allegiance to him, they were suspect and had to prove themselves. That is not the approach most career officers would take on relationships; in fact, that is not the way relationships are established in the Foreign Service; it is a career service and people perform in a professional manner and that extends to national employees as well. Ambassador Aranda, going against the Foreign Service culture—and at times sound management practices—was not really getting the most out of his staff and that was the problem. My job was to try to bridge those differences; I tried to get him to adjust his view of the staff to give them the benefit of any doubts he might have and to operate less on the basis of personalities. I had mixed success with my efforts. Overall, however, I think the tensions were kept within tolerable limits and the mission's overall accomplishments were impressive.

Let me return to the Falklands/Malvinas issue. Uruguay, as I mentioned, has a certain schizophrenia about Argentina. Uruguay has a long history of Argentine as well as British involvement from its earliest days. There was a substantial British community in Uruguay—as there was in Argentina. The British were fortunate to have an effective High Commissioner in Montevideo. I think the British Foreign Office was pleasantly surprised by their High Commissioner's performance. Prior to the crisis, Montevideo was viewed in London as more of a reward for faithful service than as a training ground for the up-and-coming. The Falklands changed all that. The British High Commissioner, who I came to know well, was a courageous woman and a wise diplomat and stood up

under the pressure. She represented the UK very well, particularly when compared to the Argentinian Ambassador I described earlier. In Uruguay, the government was run by the military. The civilian political leadership, who may have differed on certain policies, were totally united in their distaste for the military regime. So most of the political dialogue was with the civilians—the political elites of the two parties: Blancos and Colorados who all supported a speedy return to democratic government. The fact that Argentina was ruled by an authoritarian regime was probably the greatest liability it had to carry—certainly in Latin America and probably generally. It would have had greater support for its action against the British if the government were of a different stripe; as it was, any action that the Argentinian government took was suspect. Certainly the invasion of the Islands was questioned as a reasonable action. So whatever anti-colonial legitimacy the Argentinian regime might have asserted was pretty much dismissed because of its authoritarian origins and its bumbling behavior.

Uruguay was important to the UK in a strategic sense because, particularly at the beginning of the crisis, its supply lines were very tenuous; it had a great deal of difficulty in re-supplying its forces on the Falklands. The British were anxious to find a safe and efficient avenue to evacuate some of the more critical medical cases by air; so they needed landing rights and access to ports somewhere on the continent. So early on, by relying on historical ties, they were able to land their planes in Uruguay. But as Argentine pressures increased on the Uruguayans, those landing rights were terminated and port facilities were denied to the British. But by and large the Uruguayans did maintain as even handed approach as possible, although toward the later stages, as I have suggested, they were forced to tilt toward Argentina. The role of the British High Commissioner was an important factor in keeping Uruguay to a balanced policy; our role was initially to find some accommodation between the feuding parties, with Secretary Haig's personal involvement. Eventually we came down on the side of the UK. In retrospect, and even at the time, there was no question in my mind that we would support Great Britain.

I remember that during the tensest moment, a friend from London—Hugh O'Shaughnessy of the Financial Times—came through Montevideo. He had obtained a visa to enter Argentina using his Irish passport and his Irish name. After he had filed his stories from Buenos Aires, he left Argentina for a few days rest in Uruguay. I invited him to stay with me, which he did. He told me that he was quite surprised by the U.S. position, he had read the press and expected us to support Argentina. I asked him how he could ever come to that conclusion. He finally acknowledged that he had been quite wrong. But I must say that these events took place early in the Reagan administration which included voices that in the early days of the crisis, appeared to support Argentina. In the early stages, we did try to find a formula for settlement; if you are going to be a mediator, you have to adopt an even-handed approach, and that stance might have misled some observers into believing we would eventually back Argentina.

Our decision to back the UK led in Montevideo to several shouting sessions with the Argentinian Ambassador who counted us among the “war criminals.” In fact, it was he who was later indicted as a criminal and placed in prison in Buenos Aires for his torture of Argentine political prisoners. The rising level of tensions over the Falklands/Malvinas led to the evacuation of a large contingent of the American Embassy staff from Buenos Aires. Montevideo was designated “safe haven;” so initially that staff came to Montevideo by ferry and over land; they stayed in Montevideo for some weeks before returning to Buenos Aires. That led to considerable confusion because, under emergency evacuation procedures, the clear expectation is that the designated “safe haven” is essentially a stop over place for an onward trip home or to another more secure “safe haven.” The idea was that people would come to Montevideo first and then move on. I learned subsequently that an understanding had been reached between our Ambassador in Buenos Aires and the Department. He had no intention of sending his people home; he merely wanted to take some action to ease any morale problems at post and address concerns in Washington. So under the guise of sending them to a “safe haven,” he sent certain staff members and

their families to Montevideo for a period of time; he had no intention for them to go any farther, established evacuation procedures notwithstanding.

But we at Embassy Montevideo were operating on a different assumption; we expected the BA staff to move on after a few days in Uruguay. We had reports that showed that members of the Argentine intelligence services were active in Montevideo; that created a threat to the Americans from Buenos Aires that we had to take seriously. We imposed certain restrictions on the evacuees; they were not happy with that decision. Some of them seemed to anticipate little more than a shopping spree in Montevideo at US government expense; they fully expected to return to BA shortly. So we had some problems in managing the visitors but it ended happily, with their eventual return to Argentina.

Pressures were placed on the Foreign Ministry by the Uruguayan military who were the closest friends the Argentine government had in Montevideo. Uruguay had some very good diplomats, but they found it increasingly difficult to maintain an even-handed policy. Eventually, we began to see a shift toward Argentina. For example, the head of our Political Section was declared persona non grata; the Ambassador was called in by the Foreign Ministry to be advised that this individual was being expelled because he had allegedly made some comments that were deemed by a senior Uruguayan military officer to be unacceptable interference in the domestic affairs of Uruguay; i.e. Uruguay's position vis-a-vis Argentina. The alleged offense took place at a diplomatic reception where Argentinians and senior Uruguayan naval officers were present. The latter brought the allegations to the attention of the Foreign Ministry, pressing for action against the embassy officer. We interpreted this action as a signal that Uruguay was moving to the Argentina camp. In part, the action reflected a shift in the environment as the war continued; the Uruguayans were under increasing pressure to support their large neighbor and to oppose the UK.

We had a debate in the Embassy on what our response should be to the Uruguayan action. There were some proposals made which I viewed as unwise and some which

were down right foolish. I counseled strongly against those and managed to stop them. The options considered ranged from ignoring the expulsion; to taking action—not without risk to sources and methods—to disprove the allegations; to responding in kind. In the end, we recommended that a person of equal rank to our section chief in the Uruguayan Embassy in Washington be expelled; that is what happened. The whole episode was unprecedented; the Uruguayans seemed to be seriously alarmed by our reaction. I must say that not everyone in the Embassy favored this course of action; there were some self serving arguments made. I think we did the right thing; we certainly could not have ignored the Uruguayan action and our response was measured and appropriate.

Ironically, we expelled a diplomat whose views were very much pro-American. But he was the logical choice given his position. We managed to maintain a very good relationship with that Uruguayan diplomat when he returned to Montevideo although he was not very happy by the disruption we caused his family life. We gave the American officer who had been expelled a meritorious honor award in a very public ceremony prior to his departure to underscore that we considered him to be blameless. Then we had a farewell reception at the airport when he left—that was widely reported in the media.

Fortunately, the Falklands/Malvinas episode came to an end and our relationships with Uruguay returned to their even keel. We then could focus again on the major issue in Uruguay: the transition from a military authoritarian regime to a democratic one.

The transition took place during my tour. The student-led violence which led to a military takeover in Uruguay occurred at about the same time as similar movements around the world—e.g. the violence in Germany (Rudy the Red and the Bader-Meinhof group). Uruguay is a very European oriented country. The events in Germany and elsewhere in Europe made a deep impression in Uruguay, particularly among the students—the sons and daughters of the elites were the most active in the Tupamaro movement. The Uruguayan economy is live-stock based; but society is urban centered. Building on European socialist models, Uruguay became the first Latin American welfare state.

A booming cattle economy supported social indices more frequently associated with northern Europe—high education and literacy levels, long life expectancy, the highest per capita meat consumption in the world, high social expectations. Expectations rise as the economy expands; when a down turn follows with expectations still high, political trouble is frequently the consequence. Uruguay's political system was simply overwhelmed. The politicians, unable to cope with the violence, invited the military in. The regime responded by restricting political discourse and tightening control. That is the opposite of what should have happened and resulted in an explosion. The dissidents, instead of being accommodated within the system, went underground and turned to violence; the political elites panicked and turned to the military, which took repressive actions. This era was marked by the murder of an American public safety advisor, Dan Mitrione. He was kidnaped by the Tupamaros and eventually murdered.

The military was still in power when I arrived in Montevideo. The Tupamaros had been defeated and essentially eliminated as a viable force by the military at heavy cost both in lives and to the social fabric of the country. The country was gradually knitting back together; the political elites had essentially turned power over to the military. But now they wanted it back. The country was looking for a formula which allow the civilian political leaders and the military to live together in a democratic system. This was not an unfamiliar situation; many countries have successfully managed similar transitions. In the final analysis, an agreement was struck between the political parties and the military on the terms of a transition which would take place gradually following democratic elections. This process was underway while I was in Montevideo, and, despite a number of bumps on the road, a democratic-elected President took power in 1985.

The Argentine situation was a threat to the transition because in Uruguay it tended to increase the pressure for the continuation of authoritarian rule. That translated into the possibility of an interruption in the transition process. The collapse of the military regime in Buenos Aires following the Falklands war was viewed with some reservation by the Uruguayan military; it tempted them to consider not withdrawing from power because

of the concern that the Uruguayan military would be held in the same contempt as their Argentine brothers after the inauguration of a civilian government. On the other hand, the fall of the Argentinian junta was welcomed in Uruguayan political circles.

We were very much committed to the transition. We had very good contacts with all levels and segments of society, including the military. We used those contacts to make it eminently clear what our position was; we wanted the transition to move forward without delay. As we neared elections, there were issues between the two competing political parties; one or the other felt disadvantages by the drift of events and one or the other was tempted to push for a delay or a change in the previously agreed rules governing the transition. A bargain had been struck at the beginning that we supported even though it may not have been the bargain of the process that might have been struck following the relative decline of the military's rule. But we recognized that any attempt to change any part of the deal might well have meant a complete renegotiation which might have ended in no deal at all and a prolongation of military rule. So we insisted that all parties kept the final goal in mind and that the disagreements that arose during the transition be settled without disrupting the transition timetable. We were at this point within striking distance of the final goal; as we got closer to it, the parties, seeking tactical advantage, raised objections, as I have suggested. So we held extensive conversations with party and military leaders trying to keep the transition on track.

I think our policy had always been clear—namely that we were supporting a transition to democratic government. The views of some members of the Reagan administration were welcomed by the Uruguayan military—e.g. Kirkpatrick's philosophical treatise on the differences between dictatorships and authoritarian regimes which gave considerable credit to the policies of some military regimes. These views, despite self-serving interpretation by Uruguay's military apologists may have been helpful to us because they tended to reassure the military. I don't think Ms. Kirkpatrick disagreed at all with our policy in Uruguay; she made the point that change at least was possible under a military regime.

Democracy was always the goal. Change and democracy were precisely what we were supporting in Uruguay.

Human rights was still a concern. The transition process included the issue of the treatment of certain political prisoners; their rights had been violated in the past, although many of these people had clearly committed crimes and were not imprisoned solely or perhaps even primarily because of their political views. Nevertheless, their treatment in prison was an issue. A number of these individuals had been tortured; the evidence of that was clear. We successfully maintained the most extensive index of prisoners in Uruguay; we made it known to the authorities that we had such a list. That reinforced the pressure to deal humanely with those in custody and to comply with the terms of the political agreements which included provisions for the release of most of the prisoners. We were very conscious of abuses that had occurred. We took a very strong stand on human rights abuses.

Uruguay did not take a major interest in events in Central America. It was far away and was considered diversion. The Argentine military had played a nefarious role early on, particularly in El Salvador. But the Uruguayans saw Central America as a far distant area of no great interest or concern to them. Uruguay's diplomatic tradition was to focus on those places where it might find a niche for itself—where did its diplomacy have a comparative advantage? Returning to the social indices that I mentioned earlier, Uruguay produced a number of outstanding world citizens and diplomats far greater than its population might suggest. One of Uruguay's major exports was these citizens; many of them held leadership positions in international organizations. Uruguay also became a center for international meetings—e.g. Punta del Este, a Uruguayan resort was the site where the Alliance for Progress was launched in the 1960s. Uruguay has consistently produced important figures for the world stage. So it tends to look at issues from a global perspective and for the potential for a Uruguayan arbitration or mediation role.

Uruguay is a small country, but my assignment there was especially rewarding. It is a very special place. The history of Uruguay is unique in the region; the development of its two-party system is instructive, going back to the early part of the 1900s. The political tradition is basically European, with an overlay of the modern American system. Some of the people who rose in prominence in politics while I was there are still very active today. We got to know some of them quite well. We maintain friendships to this day.

Q: Then in 1985, you were assigned to the Department as the Director of the Office of Central American Affairs. That was a quiet time—only a civil war and a counter-revolution simultaneously.

MELTON: When I was in Uruguay, I received a message asking me to return to the Department for consultations. It was a period of turmoil for ARA personnel with five DCM vacancies and other senior positions still to be filled after Reagan's re-election of 1984. So the Bureau decided to bring to Washington as many candidates for these jobs as it could identify and to conduct a mini job fair, with the DCM candidates being interviewed at the same time by the ambassadors to those five countries. These chiefs of mission were to select their DCMs through this round-robin interview process—it was a unique approach to senior personnel decisions. I was interviewed by all five ambassadors, although I had some reservations about taking another DCM position. It was an interesting experience; I was offered several of those vacant DCM jobs, including Honduras and Peru, but in the final analysis, I thought I had already served as a DCM and I would gain greater experience in an executive position in the Department—as an office director.

These five ambassadors were all looking for different attributes depending on their own desires and the needs of the posts. They were a mix of career and non-career ambassadors; the career ones, generally speaking, were more sophisticated in what they were looking for—the smart ones looked for people with complementary skills, different from their own. The non-career people, if they were smart, also looked for candidates who cover gaps in their own backgrounds as well as people with whom they felt comfortable

and who were not “yes” men. The smart ones selected good officers; the others didn't do so well.

I returned in 1985 to be the Office Director for Central American Affairs. There was a new Assistant Secretary, Elliott Abrams. As a career person, I didn't give that much thought. But while on home leave before starting my new assignment I got a call from Abrams' secretary asking me to come to the Department to talk to the Assistant Secretary. We had a very pleasant chat; I did not consider it to be a job interview, but in retrospect I am sure that was exactly what it was.

Central America was a highly charged domestic political issue. But it was not true, as some at the time asserted, that policies were set by the ideologues while the “moderates” were on the outside looking in. The issues were important, as they were controversial; people of all shades of opinion, participated in the policy process. When people are deeply involved, it is more likely that personal attacks will be made and that excesses may occur. That certainly was true during my tour as Office Director. People often took things personally, even though the debates were about policy. Outsiders don't fully understand the policy process. If they disagree with the policy—and many did—too often they engaged in personal attacks, including vilification of working-level officers both in the field and Washington. This legacy, unfortunately, lives on in some areas.

Many of the policies had already been extensively debated by the time I arrived in the Office. The U.S. government had begun several years earlier, and was continuing, to build up its capabilities in the region. The Washington bureaucracy—in all agencies—dealing with Central America had also grown. In the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, my Office had already gone through an expansion; when I took over, I think it was the largest Office in the Department—more than 25 officers. There was also a significant turn-over of staff at the time. So there were a lot of new people working on Central America—in all departments and in the field as well. It was clear that there were major stakes for the U.S. in each of the countries as well as considerable domestic political interest.

The situation in each of the countries was different. There were some common threads, but the differences were quite significant.

Let me start with Panama, which also fell under my office. It was ruled by Manuel Noriega at the time—directly or indirectly. He was undoubtedly calling the shots. The main issue was corruption in the leadership. It was only later that the drug connection surfaced. Panama was available to the highest bidder. Noriega maintained relationships simultaneously with us and with Fidel Castro; Panama was ambivalent about which horse to back in the several struggles underway in the region. Noriega was not constant to any policy except the one of greed and avarice. Our main effort was to try to move the country toward more democracy and stronger political institutions. An election had been held and Nicholas Barletta, a World Bank official, had won the Presidency. We had high hopes that he would be the instrument through which democratic institutions could be strengthened. But he ran afoul of Noriega, who had him deposed by a pliant legislature. Barletta was pressured to resign; it was highly controversial and we had lengthy discussions about possible US reactions. It became much clearer later how Barletta was pressured to resign. Noriega took more direct control and then Barletta repudiated his resignation.

Within the U.S. government some people pushed for a visible gesture of support for Barletta. The problem was his case was suspect because on the surface at least he had resigned and the Panamanian Congress had accepted it without much reluctance. To seek to restore him in such circumstances would have been difficult to sustain, although in retrospect, it was probably the best of a number of relatively poor policy choices available.

The military-embassy relationship in Panama is and may well still be a continual source of some concern. For many years, the U.S. military was by far the largest and most visible US presence—we had something like 10,000 troops there at the time. The Embassy was small and a relatively minor player in the policy game. Large Panamanian issues always tended to have military implications which meant that USSOUTHCOM, the Panama-based US unified military command, had usually the predominant voice. Of course, the military

was not always of one view. The USSOUTHCOM commander was not very keen on using his troops for what he deemed to be essentially political matters; so if incidents occurred, the U.S. commander favored conciliation over confrontation. There had been incidents between US military and Panamanian National Guard personnel from time to time. Some of our soldiers had been injured; in one case there had been an abduction which resulted in a wife being assaulted and a US soldier being beaten. When the question of a US response arose, the U.S. commander's attitude seemed to be “this too shall pass and we have larger issues at stake.” The civilians wanted to take a tougher stance partly to prevent any misunderstanding by Noriega, who controlled the National Guard. They felt that limits had to be set to prevent the Panamanians from using the “salami” approach and whittling our rights away slowly but surely.

During the brief Barletta-Noriega struggle, had we—the US—been more vigorous and had we been able to internally reach consensus on a strong response, the outcome might have been different. Instead, we accommodated to what was a fait accompli. I must say that to his credit, our Ambassador, Ted Briggs, argued strongly for taking action against Noriega; in retrospect, he was absolutely correct. As I suggested earlier, unfortunately the “legal” case for action against Noriega was not very strong. Furthermore, I think Washington found the issues facing us in El Salvador and Nicaragua to be of greater priority and that we had all we could handle with those two countries. There were also some factors of which I was not aware at the time—and still do not have a complete knowledge—that may have weighed against taking firmer action in Panama. For example, it is now known that there was a long standing relationship between Noriega and the CIA; I don't know to what extent that was a factor.

One of the results of this chapter in our relations with Panama was that I was asked to take greater responsibility for Panamanian affairs. Until that time—and for many years—although Panama was, according to the organization chart, the responsibility of the Office of Central American Affairs, day-to-day management of the relationship was handled by a deputy who had considerable autonomy and who reported directly to a deputy assistant

secretary. I believe that this situation came about because of the importance and volume of work that Panamanian affairs had previously generated—primarily stemming from renegotiation of the Canal treaty. But after the Barletta ouster, the officer in charge of Panamanian affairs was put explicitly under my supervision, and I took a much more direct interest in issues that arose from our relations with Panama.

When I reported to ARA in 1985, we had a bump and shove relationship over the Canal. The time table for our turning the operations of that waterway to Panama had been established by treaty, but each time some action had to be taken—e.g. transfer of territory or change in the composition and functions of the Panama Canal Commission—there were endless debates in Panama City and Washington on the interpretation and implementation of existing agreements. The Canal gave Panama an important role in the region and was of strategic importance to the United States, and time had to be devoted to its issues as well as those arising from El Salvador and Nicaragua.

Costa Rica was significant at the time because it was one of Nicaragua's neighbors. Efforts were underway to strengthen our relationship with Costa Rica in the hopes of putting additional pressure on Nicaragua and the Sandinistas. That effort was almost fatally flawed because it failed to take fully into account traditionally strong propensities in Costa Rica. In the first place, Costa Rica resisted being drawn into the Nicaraguan situation. The Costa Ricans always considered themselves to be somewhat superior to the Nicaraguans in most respects. Second, Costa Rica had taken a firm neutral position in all Central American struggles; it had effectively abolished its armed forces years before, although maintaining a very significant police force which was as large as many military forces in Central America. But officially, Costa Rica did not have an army. It had a strong tradition of civilian rule based on democratic principles stemming from the days of Jose Figueres, who was still a political force although he was no longer President. The Liberal Party of Figueres has long been the dominant party in the country and had provided some support to the Sandinistas in their struggle against the Somoza dynasty

There were some signs in 1985 that the neutrality view might be shifting. We had had a good cooperative relationship with Costa Rica based on containment of the Sandinistas. That changed somewhat when Oscar Arias came to power; he became more engaged in the Nicaraguan question; he looked for a diplomatic settlement. One of his motivations was the Costa Rican concern for the Nicaraguan refugees pouring across the border. Costa Rica had a high standard of living for a Central American country. Its social indices were well above those of the other countries in the region. The refugees were placing an increasing strain on the social and even political fabric of the country. So Costa Rica had a very strong interest in finding a settlement acceptable to all sides in Nicaragua. Arias was also looking for a democratic outcome, but felt considerable pressure to reach a settlement —almost any settlement. This drive lasted throughout his administration.

I don't think our personnel selections for Costa Rica were the best choices. Curt Winsor and Lew Tambs, both non-career ambassadors, were very, very conservative. Oscar Arias was a liberal in the classical sense. Tambs did not have the warmest of relationships with Arias. Tambs was aggressive in his ideology; he had been our Ambassador in Colombia where he had made a reputation as a vocal opponent of the drug traffic. His strong position on drugs may have led people to overlook some of his deficiencies—e.g. lack of subtlety. I went to Costa Rica as Charg# after Tambs abruptly resigned during the Iran-Contra hearings, and had considerable contact with Arias. I found him to be a very sophisticated, urbane individual with views about politics and other matters which were quite subtle. I don't think the nuances had been captured by our Embassy; they certainly were not fully conveyed to Washington.

When I talk about people, I do so with some reluctance. I recognize that it is relatively easy to pass judgments now after time has passed and we have knowledge that we may not have had at the time. Judgments that are clear now were much murkier at the time. So some of the proposals and perspectives popular at the time do not seem nearly as reasonable now. So some of Tambs suggestions may have looked much better then

than they do now. We were working under pressures which placed El Salvador and Nicaragua at the head of the Central America agenda; issues with other countries were almost secondary. So, to a significant extent, our policy toward Costa Rica—and to an extent toward Panama—was dictated by events and outcomes we were seeking in other countries. Our Ambassador in El Salvador was quite clear that his country should have top priority; solutions should first be sought in El Salvador, he argued, and then the puzzle in Nicaragua would almost automatically sort itself out. Others said that this was self-serving; the Sandinistas appeared to have a greater staying power than the rebels in El Salvador. This was a subject for lively debate.

We knew of Winsor's and Tambs' ideology, but I don't think we ever dismissed any of their recommendations because of it. That is almost impossible in Washington anyway because policy issues are seldom compartmentalized—i.e. a Costa Rican issue could not be discussed separately from the whole of Central America. So a recommendation from San Jose was most likely to touch on broader perspectives which would raise the level at which it was discussed certainly above the desk and frequently above the Office Director. There were a few issues, such as the elections, which were sui generis—that is limited to Costa Rica—but they were the exception. That was true of most of the “think pieces” from our ambassadors in Central America; their recommendations tended to be applicable to most if not all of the region and not just their country. I should point out that I didn't overlap with Winsor very much; he left soon after I started my job in Washington. So it was Tambs primarily with whom I dealt in Costa Rica. If he felt very strongly about an issue, he would call Elliott Abrams or one of the deputies directly; rarely would he call me or communicate directly with me. For him, I was a relatively low level player.

I should mention that during the 1984 US election a number of ambassadors had signed a letter supporting the re-election of Jesse Helms (R-NC). Lew Tambs and Curt Winsor were among the signatories. That was completely inappropriate, and Secretary Shultz said so. One had to wonder about the judgments of individuals who ignore the distinction between partisan political advocacy and the professional approach demanded of all chiefs of

mission. As time went along, I noted questionable judgments by Tambs. On one occasion, he crossed the line in entering into an unauthorized agreement with anti-Sandinista leader Eden Pastora. Pastora was one of the original leaders of the Sandinista movement when they overthrew Somoza, but later had a falling out with the Sandinista leadership and went into semi-retirement as a fisherman in Costa Rica. Some efforts were made to get him to rejoin the struggle against his old comrades; Lew Tambs figured in those efforts, but I always thought the “understanding” which he reached with Pastora, previously mentioned, crossed the line, and I so advised Abrams. The “understanding” was disavowed.

One of the considerations of dealing with recommendations from Tambs was that I was never quite sure what agenda he was pursuing. It was not, I think, always the Department's agenda. I was at times not quite certain where he was coming from or where he was heading. Was it the same direction that we had agreed on? I think it is true that if the two ends of the communication line do not have the same agenda, the same operating assumptions, then your level of confidence at both ends is bound to be affected.

Next let me talk about Nicaragua. When I became Office Director, our policy did not seem to be working. The Sandinistas seemed to be growing stronger and were certainly more negative towards us and at the same time were more aggressive and expansionist. So they appeared to be a greater threat than they had been in the past. They were clearly our major concern in Central America. They were providing aid and comfort to the guerrillas in El Salvador and any other groups in the region that had the resources and the will to rebel against the established order. The most significant of these relationships was the one they had with the Salvadoran guerrillas.

The principal advantage the Sandinistas held for other guerrilla organizations in the region was that they were an established government—they held the reins of power and effective control of a country. The rebels from other countries could come to Nicaragua without fear of being harassed or expelled. They were received sympathetically and, to limited

extent, could expect some material support. So Nicaragua had become a refuge for all the insurgents of Central America—a R&R place for them.

The Sandinistas were driven by ideology. They were supporting crusades against the established order, which frequently was corrupt and military dominated. The object of the crusade was to “liberate” Central America. The Sandinistas viewed themselves as the vanguard of this crusade and as such, believed they owed support—material and psychological—to their brothers in arms in neighboring countries. They had prevailed in Nicaragua and now believed they had a revolutionary obligation to help others win power in their countries. This was the situation in the mid-1980s.

In the United States, a number of prominent Americans supported the Sandinistas. Nicaragua was not normally a tourist mecca. But many Americans were drawn there after the Sandinista take-over. It was much like the days when people went to Cuba after Castro's victory, chopping cane to show solidarity with Fidel. Many Americans went to Nicaragua to be hosted by the Sandinistas; they went to see cooperatives and other symbols of Sandinista “progress.” Every week, on a Wednesday morning, these Americans would gather in front of the U.S. Embassy for a regularly scheduled demonstration of solidarity against the “imperialistic” policies of their country. So we had a very active debate in the U.S. on our Nicaraguan policy, which spilled over onto the editorial pages of our leading newspapers.

Issues generate their own constituencies; as they grow, support networks also expand. So by the mid-1980s, the Sandinista support in the United States was quite sizeable. There were active centers in many universities—both around Washington and around the country. These centers focused on US policies and were by and large critical of the U.S. government. I personally did not view these issues through an ideological prism. Like most Americans, I tend to favor the underdog and favor democracy over dictatorship. One of the reasons I decided to make the Foreign Service my career was because I wanted to be involved in these policy issues, particularly in Latin America, where I thought our

policy had been on the wrong track for many years. We had sided too often with military dictatorships and oligarchy and the economic interests of a few large firms, such as United Fruit. So I had hoped to be able to influence our policy by participating in its development.

But I must say that as time went on, I began to feel that I had been ambushed on some of these issues. When I had served in Nicaragua, I certainly was not a fan of Somoza or any military or authoritarian figure in the region. In this, I believe I was reflecting American values; if I had any biases, it was against those regimes that the U.S. left also tended to oppose. But I found that the dialogue on Central America became quickly personalized. I would talk to people, but I seldom felt that my views were heard at all; their response was almost automatically that, as a member of the government, I could not possibly be anything but the “enemy” whose views were not worthy of consideration or even hearing. That had not been my experience before, although my experience at Wisconsin was a foretaste. Before the mid-1980s, regardless of audience, I think I got a fair hearing wherever I was appearing, both in the U.S. and overseas—with one exception that took place in London when I was talking to some students about El Salvador and US defense policy. There I pretty much heard what was to be the standard position; namely that I was the representative of an odious government and therefore not worth hearing. I was shouted down. It was a throwback to the University of Wisconsin in 1970-71.

So I had some experience with intolerance and found it disturbing. It left a very bad taste in my mouth when people, in the name of democracy, did not allow views contrary to their own to be expressed in open forums. There was far too much of this. Both sides of the issue took some very peremptory stances; issues were personalized and people demonized, which was unhealthy and fueled paranoia on both sides.

Let me talk about El Salvador now. Napoleon Duarte had been elected President; he generated hope because he was clearly a democrat with impeccable credentials. He was a strong leader coming out of the Christian Democratic movement in which he had participated for many years. He had been abused and tortured by the Salvadoran military

who had denied him elective office on several occasions. There was great hope that Duarte would bring greater democratic freedom to El Salvador; he was a fresh breeze, unfettered by ties to past excesses. Many hoped that Duarte could bring peace to his country. There was some optimism, even though the situation on the ground did not look promising.

The Salvadoran military, as in most of the Central American countries, did not have a very good reputation—deservingly so. They had been associated with abuses—both human rights violations and corruption. An escalating armed confrontation with Marxist guerrillas, which inevitably put greater power in the hands of the military, was not only distasteful, but worked against the introduction of democratic reforms.

The situation in El Salvador in 1985 then was not good. There had been predictions in years past that El Salvador had turned the corner; in fact it was still looking for that corner. Still, Duarte provided hope that a settlement could be reached. Later there were discussions about how we should set our own priorities—should we concentrate on helping Duarte reach an acceptable solution in El Salvador or should we concentrate on Nicaragua? Given the small size of Central American countries, one would think that the U.S. government would be able to pursue policies appropriate to each country. But that was hard to do.

The Salvadoran guerrilla view was to “stay the course” because the U.S. had no staying power—a view derived from their assessment of our Vietnam experience—and would eventually lose interest in the region particularly if some American blood was shed. In 1985, the guerrillas murdered several Embassy Marine guards at a restaurant in San Salvador to bring the costs of war more directly to the attention of the American people. It was a calculated act. From time to time, other Americans were targeted for the same reason. They hoped that the first Reagan administration would be defeated and that the next one would be more sympathetic to their views.

There were mixed views about the origins of the guerrilla movement. Some thought they were creatures of the Soviets, some of the Cubans, some of the Sandinistas. I don't think it was a simple matter to determine paternity. The Sandinistas clearly had connections to the Cubans, certainly through Tomas Borge—the Minister of the Interior in charge of the police—and to a lesser extent through the Ortega brothers who had been given sanctuary in Cuba during an earlier period. The Sandinistas clearly received support from the Cubans—Soviet arms and other subsidies. But to characterize them as creatures of the Soviets or the Cubans would have missed the point. The Nicaraguans had a strong Marxist home grown faction; the Sandinistas had a history and an ideology—Marxist—which guided their actions; their blueprint for consolidation of power was a combination of their own experience, ideas that they had picked up in Cuba, and classical Marxist theory. To dismiss them as mere puppets of Cuba or the Soviets with no domestic base would have been a misreading of reality. Not many, I think, really believed otherwise although in a debate they might charge that the Sandinistas were tools of foreign powers—to underscore the view that a Central American foothold by the Soviets and Cuba could be a real threat to the US.

Throughout Central America the standard of living was—and is—very low. There are significant inequalities in living standards, land tenure or any other economic index; Central America ranks near the bottom in Latin America. The grievances of the population are numerous and legitimate; that was what gave popular support to the guerrilla movements—not to mention wide support in the United States. Many Americans resented their government being allied with repressive regimes which did nothing to try to raise the standard of living of their people; on the contrary, these regimes used abusive policies to try to suppress any manifestation of discontent. Our relationships with these authoritarian regimes suggested complicity with these odious policies; that raised further opposition in the U.S. to our policies in Latin America by groups consisting of, in large part, altruistic, idealistic people—many of them from religious organizations and many with considerable knowledge of the region. They could not be easily dismissed as ideologues and dupes of

the communists; they were solid citizens who felt deeply about the political, economic and social conditions in Latin America. My quarrel with those people at the time was that they did not give us and others the benefit of the doubt and would refuse to believe that there were people in their government who shared many of their concerns and who were also trying to do something about the appalling conditions in the region. The most vocal critics refused to believe that there were any other remedies than their own; they would not listen to any suggestions of other approaches.

The most effective religious organizations were associated with the Catholic Church-related. Although the population of Central America is heavily Catholic, religious orders have long been in decline throughout the region. That vacuum is filled by priests and nuns sent from the U.S. and Europe; so there were many active Catholic orders in Central America. In the 1980s, a number of them were actively engaged in providing camps in the region—the way to change the economic conditions, they came to believe, is through political action. So many priests and nuns became involved with some of the political movements in Central America—as a way to improve the economic and social conditions of the people they served. That support continues even when some of the groups being supported took to arms to change the political structure. The attitude of the priests and nuns was frequently supported by their colleagues in the religious orders in the United States who then became a factor in the political debate in the United States.

In the case of El Salvador, there were organized efforts to bring Salvadorans to the US—to provide refuge from persecution and violence. There were legitimate pressures put on the U.S. political system to legitimize this inflow of refugees by changing the presumption of the law that to be a legitimate refugee, the applicant had to prove persecution. The law was changed for the Salvadorans and later the Nicaraguans; it allowed temporary refugee status for people from those countries which allowed them to be employed in the U.S. while the conditions from which they had fled persisted. But before the law was changed, some American religious groups were harboring illegal refugees—as a protest against the laws and policies of their country. We were only indirectly involved in this area

since immigration issues were the responsibility of INS, within guidelines established by Congress. Because of the underlying policy issues, however, we would be demonized along with our colleagues in the INS and other agencies. Elliott Abrams became a man with fangs and horns, and we were depicted as his mindless clones.

Now let me turn to Honduras. Of all of the Central American countries, Honduras would be in the second tier. It was traditionally the poorest country in the region. There had been an effort in the late 1950s and early 1960s in Central America to break away from dependence on a single agricultural product—sugar cane, bananas, coffee, pineapples, timber. Honduras never made the break. There were efforts, but they were modest indeed. El Salvador was the most successful in this effort. It was the smallest country, but it had attracted enough investment in industry to have built a respectable base. A simultaneous effort to achieve economic integration in Central America essentially benefitted established industries—those that were already dominant in one or more countries of the region. So countries like Honduras, with no industries, fell farther behind. El Salvador did achieve significant benefits from economic integration as did Guatemala. Benefits elsewhere were modest.

Honduras was left largely behind. There was a separation between inland Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, on the coast. San Pedro Sula was doing much better. Honduras was traditionally controlled by conservative military leaders, regardless of the form of government. Honduras had not been friendly towards either El Salvador or Nicaragua—wary of the latter and in frequent conflict with the former. Much of the tension resulted from population spill over from fast growing, but tiny El Salvador. The famous “soccer war” between the two countries reflected these tensions. Animosity between Honduras and El Salvador had existed for many years. We had tried in the 1970s to balance our military assistance between the two countries—at low level. By the mid-1980s, the situation had changed; El Salvador and Nicaragua had risen to the top of our agenda; Honduras had

become a partner in our policy; El Salvador was a zone of conflict between the Duarte government and the Marxist insurgents, the FMLN.

Honduras had gone through a political transformation; it had held democratic elections which resulted in a civilian President. But democratic institutions were non-existent or very weak, so that the military remained in de facto control. Our policy to build democratic institutions in the region first had to deal with ongoing conflict both in Nicaragua and El Salvador; Honduras took lower priority once again.

The Salvadoran guerrillas established training and rest and recuperation facilities in UN-run refugee camps just over the Honduran border, which the Honduran military viewed as a threat to the security of their country. On their other border, the Salvadorans saw the major build up by the Sandinista armed forces. So they obviously supported all our efforts to reduce the power of the Sandinistas and the Salvadoran guerrillas. When the Nicaraguan Resistance or Contras were formed, the Honduran military were quite sympathetic because they viewed this force as a buffer between themselves and the Sandinistas. So the Hondurans cooperated in our efforts to support the Contras.

Guatemala was a terrible story. It had long endured low-level indigenous guerrilla warfare. The population was heavily Indian—the most in the region. The guerrilla movement had started with the Indians. The regime's response was ruthless and much bloodshed ensued. The country had always suffered from violence—individuals were personally armed. That was true in much of Central America; they were violent societies and the shedding of blood seemed to come much too easily. The guerrilla warfare in Guatemala was low level, but persistent. It had not captured much attention, except from some US groups—which highlighted the human rights abuses taking place in the region. These groups quite properly were applying pressure to reduce the level of the abuses and the violence.

Many of these groups blamed the abuses and violence on US policy. That was a problem; most of those involved in the policy, on all sides, would agree that the abuses were taking place, but differences would appear when it came to assessing blame. The critics maintained that US policy was at the root of the problems; some even suggested that the U.S. itself was guilty of some of the abuses. The policy makers focused on how the abuses could be mitigated while keeping the focus on other policy issues, including economic development and democratization. So efforts at dialogue between policy-makers and critics quickly broke down with each side accusing the other of bad faith.

In one case I recall, one of the critics was calling attention to some human rights abuses in Guatemala and holding US policies responsible. One of my staff said, “That is factually wrong. We should answer that allegation.” It was not the specific case that was at the issue; it was overall U.S. policy that was being challenged. In retrospect, by publicly responding to specific allegations, we may have actually heightened the level of the polemics. That might have been inevitable, but I look back with some regret on that episode, which appeared to pit us against the human rights advocates. People who were calling attention to the abuses were correct to do so, as were we in defending US policy. It was unfortunate that the two sides could never have a meeting of minds. If we could have, we might have made more progress quicker.

In Guatemala the leadership was suspect. The level of violence and the power of the military tended to drive the democrats out or underground. The U.S. government is not monolithic in its views on military regimes or the political role of the military. Some elements of the government are more comfortable than others on working with the military in power. Our policy over the years has encouraged the establishment of strong relationships between the U.S. armed forces and foreign military services; these relationships are often very helpful, but sometimes can also be negative. You can never be quite sure that all elements of the U.S. government are communicating the same message; the informal contacts between people—US and their foreign counterparts

—at times may convey different signals that can confuse and, in some cases, actually undermine US policy. Our military-to-military relationships may not have always helped in Central America.

Belize is an appendage to Central America. While conflict raged in the rest of the region in the mid-1980s, the central issue in Belize was its dispute with neighboring governments. So in addition to the other problems we had to deal with, we had to face this possibility of armed conflict between the two countries. There was a residual—small—British military presence in Belize to stabilize the situation. This was most helpful. We were looking for a negotiated settlement. Eventually, with good sense all around, it came.

What I have done to this point is to describe essentially the situation which I encountered when I reported for duty in 1985. Let me talk a little more about what happened in the 1985-88 period.

As I have said, one of our principal goals in the region was to foster democratic development. Progress was hindered by endemic human rights abuses and violence. Add to that mix the guerrilla movements which perpetuated the violence. Our challenge was to find means to change this situation over the long run. The policy makers viewed the Salvadoran guerrillas and the Sandinistas as essentially anti-democratic. They were authoritarian and based on a Marxist philosophy which certainly was not democratic. In addition, these insurgents were guilty of extensive human rights abuses. They were certainly not the democratic answer for the region. So our priority was to find democratic alternatives to these guerrilla movements.

In Nicaragua, pursuit of our objectives led to the development of an armed resistance movement which operated from bases on the Nicaragua/Honduras border and in the south of Nicaragua as well. We gave this group—which became known as Contras—heavy support. Contrary to how they were characterized by their detractors, the Contras were essentially a peasant resistance movement; most came from very humble origins—most

from the rural areas of Nicaragua. They did not like the Sandinistas and their authoritarian ways. Ironically, both the Contras and many of the original Sandinista supporters might have agreed on a broad reform program, including land reform and other societal changes. But the ideological schism which separated the two groups was so large that dialogue was impossible—even among family members some of whom may have backed the Sandinistas and some of whom may have backed the Resistance. I have no question that the Contras were fully committed to their cause; they could not have organized otherwise. There has not been sufficient analysis of this grass-roots army; I think it would be a very interesting story.

Ollie North was a relatively junior member of the NSC staff in 1985. He was not even a member of the NSC office which handled Latin America; he was part of the politico-military staff focusing on terrorism and national security issues. Gradual, however, he became more and more involved in Central America. He was a strong personality who seemed to have very little supervision in the White House. In retrospect, it is interesting to note that North was really a low level staffer—he was a Lieutenant Colonel in the Marine Corps. Lieutenant Colonels do not make policy. But Ollie North did not fit the norm. I first met North at an anti-terrorism conference in Panama when I was DCM in Uruguay. I was surprised by the deference shown him by people much senior to him. When he stood up to make comments, general officers and senior Washington officials who knew who he was paid attention. So did I.

I had no further contact with North until I had been in my Office Director's job for some time. There were occasional inquiries about specific issues, but little more. Only later did he emerge as the key NSC staffer on Central America, pushing aside the State Department officer on the NSC staff who formally carries that responsibility. He became the NSC representative on a restricted inter-agency group which reviewed most of the major Central American issues, particularly as they related to Nicaragua.

I had more exposure to him later. Our laws changed; initially Congress had authorized US government support for the Nicaraguan resistance; then it cut off support and then changed again to allow limited support—humanitarian assistance. A separate organization within the Department was established to provide that assistance. Ambassador Robert Duemling was brought in to head up this new office. He was a very good choice; he was scrupulously honest and made sure that his mandate was scrupulously observed. I know much more now about this than I did at the time the effort was organized. For example, I now know, from Oliver North's testimony, that a parallel organization had been established in which he was involved. There was a question of how humanitarian assistance would be delivered to the resistance. It had to be done by air, which limited the numbers of people who were willing to undertake this effort. There aren't many independent contractors who are willing to drop supplies into hostile territory. And there aren't many companies or individuals anxious to expose their aircraft to enemy fire.

Therefore among Duemling's first task was the hiring of contractors to undertake the supply operation. Ollie North knew some people; it was not clear at the time—as it is today—that these people had been involved in the off-the-books army supply operation to the Contras. To Duemling's credit, he was very scrupulous in ensuring that the letter of the law was followed. He did not knowingly allow any of the aircraft he contracted to be used for simultaneous arms deliveries. He only allowed his contractors to deliver humanitarian assistance on flights his offices paid for as authorized by law. He was under pressure from a number of quarters to deliver more than humanitarian assistance; resistance wanted more than just food and medicines. Duemling made sure that all of his activities met the letter of the law; that was much to his credit.

As I said, the assistance to the resistance was run by a separate office in the Department. A lot of the work of this office had to do with logistics and contracting. We did not have any day-to-day association with that office. In our Office Directorate, as is usual in the Department, we had desk officers for each of the Central American countries; they

handled the day-to-day matters. Although we were involved in larger policy issues, by and large fundamental policies were decided above our level. The desk officers, who were most knowledgeable about their countries, might suggest different approaches than the prevailing wisdom; a debate would follow—that happened frequently and to good effect. But the larger issues were dealt with in the restricted interagency group in which we were not normally represented.

I don't think we had any major disagreement with the policies developed in the interagency group. The transgressions that did take place did so outside our purview; we did not find out about them until some time later. Much of what came out of the North's hearings was news to us. There were aspects of the Central American operations that were not under State Department control. For example, when the Contra supply plane was shot down over Nicaragua—which occurred toward the end of my tour—the first question to us was "Who is he?" He turned out to be an American citizen who had been captured by the Sandinistas. We later found out that he was a member of a support network that was not related to the humanitarian assistance effort in the slightest. The issue then became what would happen to this American citizen. As far as we knew, he was not on the government's payroll. There was a common sense issue. I had learned that when an American citizen is in real peril, one of our most common failings was not how the case was ultimately decided, but rather how we managed the process, e.g. what contacts and information do we provide the family. The hostage taking in Iran, for example, had demonstrated the importance of being supportive and forthcoming to families of the victims.

So in this case, I wanted to make sure that that past shortcoming would not be repeated. We were in touch as soon as we could with the family of the American airman and tried to provide all the information we had available. The Sandinistas wanted the family to come to Nicaragua so they could make some political points through a show trial. Mrs. Hassenfus wanted to get her husband out of Nicaragua. She engaged a lawyer. Even though the lawyer served on a pro bono basis, the cost to the Hassenfus family quickly mounted. Our desk officer had been acting as an intermediary with Mrs. Hassenfus. He reported

that Mrs. Hassenfus was increasingly anxious about the costs and her own support while her husband was being detained. He asked for guidance. I told the desk officer just to take no further action and went to see Elliott Abrams. I told Abrams that I didn't think it was proper for the desk officer to be involved in the issue of resources; this was not something the U.S. government should be funding. He agreed. So we didn't get involved in the Hassenfus case beyond what we might do in a consular sense.

It is clear now—it wasn't then—that Mrs. Hassenfus believed her husband was a US government employee. We did not. So we were starting from two entirely different premises. Mrs. Hassenfus wanted US government officials drawn into the case, and believed that it was a US government problem because the principal was an employee. We on the other hand viewed the case as a protection and welfare matter which did not require any further involvement than a normal case of this kind would require. We wanted to be helpful in assisting a US citizen and to limit public diplomacy losses but that would be the limit of our involvement; we stopped the desk officer from participating any further in this matter.

CIA's role in managing assistance to the Contras was circumscribed by law. The legislation changed several times in the mid-1980s. For example, the bill authorizing humanitarian assistance to the Nicaragua resistance movement specifically gave that responsibility to the Department, which was almost unique in some respects. Activities of this kind would in the past have been the exclusive preserve of the Agency, but by this time the Congressional debate focused on whether the management of this program belonged in the Agency. The support to the resistance was duly authorized by Congress, but it was subject to an unusual amount of public debate and scrutiny. It was unique that the Department and some of its personnel were involved in an activity that before would have been the exclusive province of another government agency.

I think there is always a concern that in situations such as in Nicaragua—and much of Central America—the fine hand of the Central Intelligence Agency might be involved.

There is a division of responsibilities in the U.S. government which is quite proper. Problems arise, however, when the Department does not have access to all information it needs concerning a specific issue, particularly when other agencies are involved. Reliance on agencies which are not open to public scrutiny and failure to include in the decision-making process all those with a legitimate interest in the outcome can produce very poor results. I think a more open process would have been better, but this is said with the advantage of hindsight.

Nicaragua under the Sandinistas was a very interesting problem in diplomatic relations. We conducted normal relations with the Sandinista government while giving assistance to people who were intent on overthrowing that government. We had a modest Embassy in Managua, headed first by Tony Quainton and then Harry Bergold. It must have been an interesting experience for the Sandinistas as well, dealing with representatives of a government bent on replacing them. On the ground, the Ambassador's access to the government and those associated with it was completely controlled by the Sandinistas. The American Ambassador has always had high profile in Managua; he travels in a large chauffeur driven limousine; at that time he was protected by the Sandinistas, with a government provided personal police riding in the front seat of the car. So that his every movement was well known; every contact was recorded. Those constraints certainly limited the Ambassador's access both to the government as well as to the opposition. Within the government, the Sandinista leadership would decide who would see the American Ambassador and how frequently. So if the Ambassador wanted access to one of the Ortegas; Interior Minister Tomas Borge; or Miguel Descoto, the Foreign Minister, or anyone else, the Sandinistas would decide who and when—or if at all. So our ability to conduct business in Managua was highly circumscribed, although an Ambassador's style was obviously an important factor in our ability to conduct business with the Sandinistas.

Our Ambassadors developed some access. I don't like to characterize the points of view of my predecessors, but I think I had more exposure to Bergold's approach. Quainton was in place when I began my job in Washington, but was not there long thereafter.

Bergold was certainly not a Sandinista supporter, but he reached the conclusion that the Sandinistas would probably be in power for an extended period. That analysis suggested a re-examination of some of our policies and activities; his view challenged some of the assumptions on which our policy was based, principal among them that the Sandinistas should not be considered a permanent fixture. Harry felt that we would be more effective if we would accept the reality that the Sandinistas would be governing Nicaragua for many years and therefore deal with them as we might with an Eastern European communist state, whose policies and attitudes we also did not like—governments which Bergold knew well. So he questioned some of our anti-Sandinista activities. While intellectually I could appreciate this point of view, I was loath the support and approach which might actually contribute to the Sandinistas ability to remain in power.

On the other hand, the Nicaraguan representatives in Washington had wide contacts with a variety of support groups in the area. They had extensive contacts on the Hill, both with members of Congress and staffers, to whom they made their case in effective ways. They had less contacts with the Department; we would see them from time to time, but not on a regular basis. They had a small staff in Washington, as we did in Managua. We would periodically call in senior Nicaraguan diplomats to chastise them about excesses on Nicaragua or to notify them of restrictions on their mission, usually in retaliation for action against ours. Those contacts were proper and formal. I suspect that the Nicaraguans had calculated that they would not get much out of the Department or the administration in general and that they needed to make their pitch to a more sympathetic audience provided by non-government organizations and certain Congressional officials. They used public diplomacy in a very effective way, taking full advantage of our open society. The Nicaraguan Foreign Ministry spokesman, Alejandro Benaria, was their most effective public figure; he had attended the University of California at Berkeley. Many Sandinistas had attended American universities and colleges and spoke perfect English; they made very good spokesmen for their cause on US TV talk shows on which they appeared regularly. On those TV shows, including the network evening news, the U.S. position

was usually presented by a non-administration person who may not have been familiar with the most current information; Elliott Abrams was the only official who would appear regularly. While Abrams was more than a match for the Sandinista representative, the U.S. government's position was not always so well represented and the Nicaraguans often made the better case. When Abrams appeared, it was a different story; he knew his brief well and was an aggressive and pugnacious protagonist—which may be one of the reasons that he had so many problems later.

The polarization that took place in the U.S. over Central American policy was evident among Congressional staffs. There was a lot of more heat than light generated by public discussion. People had made up their minds before the debate began. They took ideological stands, minimizing any possibility of an intelligent discussion. One either agreed with a staffer or you didn't; no conversation was necessary. Our Office staff was on the Hill frequently; we passed out a lot of information. But since we supported US policy, we were viewed by the opponents of that policy with great suspicion. Further aggravating the situation was the fact that the administration was Republican while Congress was in the hands of the Democrats. So we were subject to criticism from the majority in Congress. Since the Democrats had controlled Congress for many years, the committee staffs were also led by the Democrats; the minority staffers were fewer in number and generally not as experienced since by and large they had not served as long as the majority staff. So the staff which handled Central American matters tended to be quite critical of the administration.

There seemed to be more give-and-take on policy within our own bureaus. There was a debate at the time about our policy vis-a-vis El Salvador. The view from Embassy San Salvador, not surprisingly was that the U.S. should be giving priority to that country. If the support for the Salvadoran guerrillas could be cut, the Embassy argued, then a satisfactory solution to that country's political problems could be achieved. So the suggestion was that we begin to move in that direction, including reaching some accommodation with the Sandinistas if that would end their support of the Salvadoran

insurgents. The other view was that, until the Nicaraguan issue was resolved, no lasting settlement was likely in El Salvador. So the problems in both countries had to be tackled simultaneously. The latter view was the predominant view.

My impression then and now was that President Reagan was primarily interested in the big picture, he was not that interested in details of policy implementation. These were left to others; they managed the policy implementation process. But the approval of the broad outlines of a policy and its public articulation was a presidential responsibility; I think he was very effective in that role. The President was also involved in discussions with foreign leaders who came to Washington, like President Duarte. Day-to-day implementation decisions were left to the policy managers.

When I left the Office Director job, the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran issues were moving in a new direction. A substantial fatigue factor had set in for all parties. In the U.S. revelations of wrong doing and excesses had come to light. There were new efforts to find solutions to the issues raised by the Sandinistas and the Salvadorans. Speaker Jim Wright's involvement is well documented. President Arias of Costa Rica had become very involved in trying to find a way out of the quagmire. A new Assistant Secretary, Bernie Aronson, had been appointed. He had been involved, as a private citizen, in efforts to support the Nicaraguan resistance; he now focused his and the bureau's efforts on finding a political solution to end the fighting in Central America. Gradually, the “problem solvers” took over; to the great credit of all who were involved, they found a formula to end the fighting, the Nicaraguans, a democratic election eventually led to an end to the bloodshed.

The key to finding solutions to Central American issues was to get beyond the partisan sniping both here and in the region to find acceptable accommodations unrelated to politics. We wanted a peace process which would expand democratic institutions in the region. The settlement eventually reached provided only the possibility of a way out of the problem on El Salvador and Nicaragua. The lion's share of the credit should go to the people of both countries, who, given the opportunity, caused democracy.

I should mention two additional interesting matters. Toward the end of my tour in the Office of Central American Affaires there were ambassadorial vacancies in Honduras and Costa Rica. The first vacancy occurred when Ambassador John Ferch was relieved of his duties in Honduras by Secretary George Shultz—in the midst of negotiations and active US diplomacy. Ferch got at cross purposes with Shultz and Abrams and was called home. The difference between Ferch and Washington was largely one of perceptions. This was a delicate period in our relationships with Honduran authorities in large part because the Nicaraguan resistance was operating from the Honduras/Nicaragua border area. That required some understanding from the Honduran authorities, including the Honduran military which played a major role in the politics of the country. The bilateral relationship had its ups and downs partially because the military were hard to deal with; they extracted a price for their cooperation. Shultz and Abrams felt that we could only get the cooperation we needed through aggressive diplomatic representations; they believed that Ferch did not meet their requirements. So Secretary Shultz decided to relieve him of his mission.

Shortly after that, I was asked to go to Managua to act as Charg# while decisions were pending about Embassy leadership. So I went for about a month until Bob Pasterino, the new DCM arrived to assume charge. My job in Honduras was essentially to hold the fort until the necessary personnel decisions had been reached. It was nevertheless a very busy month: there were many things going on. We had some disruptions in our operations; the USAID building had previously been sacked by an unruly mob. Though the relationship at the formal level was very friendly, there were many undercurrents which made the relationship somewhat precarious. My job was to keep things together. We had the normal mission operations and a major peace initiative underway. While I was there, a Honduran married to an American contract employee was murdered. The American was attached to a military facility far from Tegucigalpa. The episode raised questions about the authority of the chief of mission because the American employee involved worked for a military contractor; he was not a direct hire employee. The contractor urged that the employee be spirited out of the country, thereby removing him from Honduran jurisdiction.

When I was so informed, I called the contract director to my office and told him that he and his employees came under chief of mission authority and that meant that his employee would not leave Honduras until host government authorities authorized his departure. The contractor appealed my decision through military communication channels, but DoD supported me and the employee stayed. He was processed through the Honduran justice system which in time found him “not responsible.” So every day, it seemed, something new would pop up in addition to the daily decisions that had to be made on mission operations.

There were continuing programs of assistance to the Nicaraguan resistance. At a minimum, as Charg#, I had to be kept informed about this activity to make sure that Washington was fully aware of what was going on in Honduras. There was a lot of activity; this was not your traditional diplomatic program. There had been a long tradition in this area of activities by other agencies; the chief of mission was not as completely informed as he or she should have been. It was very hard for a newcomer, particularly a short timer, to establish an appropriate process to ensure full disclosure; so I did have a feeling of being on a treadmill. Much more needed to be done to bring all U.S. government activities under the purview of the chief of mission. The other agencies were very active with their own programs and were not entirely under the control of the chief of mission.

I found the Honduran civilian authorities to be quite good—particularly the President and Foreign Minister, Foreign Minister Lopez was a distinguished lawyer and a very impressive individual. But the military leadership was another story. They did not inspire a great deal of confidence, but since they were in their positions we had to deal with them. But it was difficult; the military high command had its own agenda which was not always supportive of democratic institutions. Furthermore, they did not exude honesty.

Q: In 1988, you went to Costa Rica. To do what?

MELTON That was also a temporary assignment. Ambassador Lew Tambs resigned unexpectedly. By that time, he was very much involved in the Iran/Contra hearings. It was clear that he would have a lot to say and that there would be many questions asked about his knowledge of events in Costa Rica. He chose to resign—without notice—creating an immediate vacancy. So I was asked to go to San Jose to run the Embassy until a permanent Charg# could be selected and sent. This was in late 1987—while the hearings on the Hill were in full swing.

Tambs was very, very conservative. He had come from the Thunderbird University in Arizona. He had been very vocal in support of conservative causes even while serving as Ambassador—e.g. support for Jesse Helms during the Senator's re-election campaign—that led, as I previously mentioned, to a rebuke from the Secretary. He was outspoken and independent minded—that was not always a plus because in some cases he went beyond the limits of US policy.

Tambs was difficult to work with because he didn't always make an effort to coordinate his activities with us in Washington. There were times when after the fact we were informed of matters about which we should have been advised. In one case, he held conversations with members of the Nicaraguan resistance, including Eden Pastora, during which any objective observer would agree that he implied commitments of US government support to Pastora—which he was not authorized to provide. After Tambs reported his meeting to Washington, he was told that he had gone beyond his brief; his response was that we had misconstrued his comments. We made sure that the record was corrected since Tambs' commitments were against policy and existing law. A written reprimand from the Assistant Secretary followed.

Central America is a mixture of differing countries and people. A non-career person, interested in the region, was frequently attracted to Costa Rica, in part because it was the most advanced of the countries in the region—economically as well as politically. In contrast to most Central American countries, it has a hospitable climate and is generally a

very pleasant country. If one is looking for an attractive place to be an Ambassador Costa Rica was it. That perhaps is why we have a series of non-career ambassadors there—Curt Winsor and Lew Tambs continued this tradition. Of course, Costa Rica was not entirely unique in this regard. There have been a number of Central American countries which had controversial non-career American ambassadors.

I was in Costa Rica as Charg# for about three months—longer than I had anticipated. I really got into the operations of the mission. We had a large USAID program; there was some concern that aspects of the program did not conform with USAID and US government regulations. There were also concerns about the sale of vehicles by US government employees which did not meet the requirements established by the Department. Additionally, we had some questions about the management of assistance to the Nicaraguan resistance. I got into all of these questions. There were some elements of that resistance operating from Costa Rican territory; Tambs had been deeply involved —the so-called “Opening of the Southern Front,” much to the dismay of the Costa Rican authorities. We had to deal with Oscar Arias, the President of Costa Rica, who was becoming increasingly active in the search for an overall settlement in Central America—Arias was playing the “honest broker” role and challenging aspects of US policy. While in San Jose, I met with Arias on a regular basis.

We had a number of Congressional and other visitors—many of whom wanted to talk to Arias. So the three months were very active. The Soviets had a very active Ambassador in San Jose and I got to know him well; that was interesting because this was a period of transition in Moscow—glasnost—and no one knew how it would turn out. I had, while in Washington, participated in annual discussions with the Soviets on Latin America, which we had initiated. These were held first in Washington and then London, but the first meeting was quite unsuccessful—the two sides talked past each other. The next one in London, at the Soviet Embassy, was much more promising. The Soviet lead representative was a Gorbachev supporter and spoke with great apparent authority and sincerity. The Soviet Ambassador in Costa Rica also belonged to the Gorbachev group; he

was very effective and had a good relationship with Arias. I took advantage of being in San Jose to establish a cordial professional relationship with him, which I found interesting and my colleagues in the diplomatic corps found surprising.

By this time, Ollie North was no longer a factor; he was busy defending himself on the Hill. The Iran-Contra hearings were somewhat disruptive to the workings of the bureaucracy because as policy makers were increasingly involved; gradually, the hearings rose to the top of their agendas requiring considerable work on the part of the staff collecting documents and other background material. The hearings were of considerable concern to officials of other governments because statements were being made—often contradictory—about activities in their countries, some of which they were previously unaware of. There were characterizations of foreign leaders and description of relationships which were unflattering and at times inconsistent. So those hearings did roil the waters; there were embarrassments—to put it mildly.

Q: After these two temporary assignments, what came next for you?

MELTON: Soon after returning from Costa Rica, the ambassadorship in Nicaragua was coming open with the scheduled departure of Ambassador Bergold. I was asked whether I would be interested, and I said that indeed I would be. Once my nomination had been sent forward, I left my duties as Office Director and focused on preparation for my hearings. As is becoming increasingly the norm, my nomination was held hostage by the Foreign Relations Committee—and Senator Helms—who wanted certain papers relating to Nicaraguan policy to be handed over by the administration. Those papers had no relationship to me, but the issue became a contest of will between the ranking minority member of the Committee and the administration, which was not willing to release some of the papers. This standoff held up my confirmation for about six months, and I didn't get to Managua until May 1988.

In anticipation of my confirmation hearings, I went through the usual preparation process. There are several levels of scrutiny depending on whether the country to which one is going is important to the U.S. or in the headlines of the day. If the country is of policy importance—as Nicaragua was—efforts are made to ensure that you see not only the Chairman and ranking minority member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, but as many of the members of the Committee as possible. This gives the Senators an opportunity to express their concerns and for the nominee to get to know them and to exchange some views. I went through the process; I called on Senator Pell and other members of the Committee. It soon became apparent that I would not be the issue in the confirmation process; it was our policy toward Nicaragua which was the issue. Senator Helms, as I said, also sought to use my nomination as a vehicle for extracting certain documents from the Department; he clearly was not as anxious to have a representative in Managua as was the administration. He was willing to block consideration of my nomination for a considerable period of time. And he had the ability to do so.

Eventually, an accommodation was worked out, primarily because the question of the documents lost much of its significance. I did have a hearing, and my nomination thereafter went through without difficulties. The hearing focused on US policy toward Nicaragua and what we hoped to achieve there, but it was not a heated exchange. Once the issues were laid out, there were no major differences. The argument was more about means than ends. Everybody agreed that strengthening democratic institutions in Nicaragua through elections should be the principal objective.

By this time, the Arias proposals were gaining momentum. The proposals advanced by House Speaker Wright had come and gone. The fatigue factor increasingly seemed to overwhelm all other considerations. It was clear to all protagonists that neither side would prevail in Nicaragua, at least in achieving their full agenda. Some compromises were necessary, although I think that the Sandinistas felt in control of the situation and believed that they could afford at this point to make compromises, including agreement to new

elections. But it was not certain that elections would actually be held or, if held, they would be fair. So there was considerable uncertainty about the future in Nicaragua.

We of course pushed hard for free, democratic elections. That was my main focus when I arrived in Managua.

Q: So you served in Nicaragua from May 1988 to July 1988.

MELTON: That is right. It was a short tour of 90 days. I was declared persona non grata in July. As I said, my focus was on the holding of free, democratic elections. I presented my credentials to Daniel Ortega in the old Nejapa country club, a Somoza favorite, which had been converted by the Sandinistas to a convention center and was used for a variety of ceremonial occasions. I made a brief statement in Spanish about our intent—the strong support for democratic institutions in Nicaragua. After that Ortega and his Foreign Minister sat down and we chatted. I sat between the two Nicaraguans. That was the beginning of a dialogue. My unsuccessful efforts at dialogue with the Sandinistas. I followed up this initial conversation with efforts to make the usual calls on government officials that a new ambassador makes. I asked to see Cabinet Ministers. I had one scheduled and several requests pending when we received word that all my requests for calls had to go through the Foreign Ministry. I resubmitted my requests via diplomatic note, but weeks went by without any meetings being scheduled or any response at all from the Sandinistas.

I did go around to see leaders of the democratic opposition from all parties. I also saw the press and other elements of society. But the government officials refused to see me. It was obvious that a general policy had been established—I would have to show “good behavior” before contacts would be established. The exception to that rule was a friend that I had made during my previous tour in Nicaragua. By 1988, he had become the head of the Social Security administration and a relatively senior Sandinista official. I had asked for an appointment to see him, which he granted. Later he found out that he had made a mistake. He was a very strong Sandinista, a doctrinaire Marxist; he had been a Christian Democrat,

but his views became radicalized—in large part because he had not been able to make much headway under Somoza. So he joined the Sandinistas to fight Somoza. But our old friendship stood the strain between our governments, and we were able to establish a person-to-person dialogue.

I had several meetings with the Foreign Minister, but the other Sandinistas gave me a wide berth. This was a unique situation which contrasted sharply with the relatively cordial relations the Sandinistas maintained with Ambassador Quainton and Ambassador Bergold. They were received regularly and had no problem conducting business with the government. I think the Sandinistas made a judgment that that was the way they would conduct business with the U.S. at this time. Their assessment of the individuals may also have been a factor, but I would not make too much of this. It is likely they would have treated any US representative in much the same manner.

I was increasingly vilified almost from the first day. The tone in the media became increasingly strident. I was associated with all sorts of Somoza crimes; I read in the Sandinista press that I was virtually Somoza's right hand man during my previous tour —when I was a junior officer. My role in fact was quite the opposite; I was certainly not a fan of Somoza. I think anyone who knew me then—as did my Social Security friend—understood that and knew that I did not sympathize with the Somozas one iota. But the Sandinista press vilified me daily. If this campaign was intended to intimidate me, it missed badly. I continued my efforts to get in touch with the Sandinistas, even as I continued to meet with leaders of the opposition. After my initial meeting with the Foreign Minister, I was referred to the head of the Americas division of the Sandinista Party. I was told that my contacts would be more fruitful with the Party and not the government. I said that would not do; that as representative of a government I would have to deal with the elected authorities and not party officials.

I did, as I said, see leaders of the democratic parties and I did everything quite openly. As is true in all countries, the host government is responsible for the security of all diplomats

accredited to that country. I had several guards riding with me in my vehicle plus a follow car. These guards were provided by the government. The only American guards were the Marines at the Chancery. It would have been very difficult to do anything without the Sandinistas knowing about it. In any case, I wanted to conduct my business quite openly. That transparency became an important factor after the Sandinistas decided to declare me persona non grata and, at the same time, to crack down on the opposition. I was expelled along with six members of my staff. The action that the Sandinistas took was part of a series of actions which they took to crack down on all opposition elements.

Most of the personal vilification took place in Nicaragua, although occasional anti-Melton pieces appeared in the American press as well. There were daily attacks in the Managua press and weekly demonstrations in front of the Embassy. These demonstrations were part of a regular tour given to visiting Americans by the Sandinistas, who also organized visits to communes and other Sandinista show cases. Some of the Americans would spend time in the rural areas chopping cane, working along side their Sandinista comrades, but on Wednesday they would join the regularly scheduled demonstrations in front of our Chancery. Periodically, we would meet with these Americans, if they asked for appointments. During the demonstrations, I became one of the favorite targets.

The unwillingness of government officials to see me, unless I was willing to accommodate to norms laid down by the Sandinistas, was part of their approach. I would on occasion be asked why I didn't conduct myself as some of my predecessors had. I frequently spoke with Sandinista officials at receptions and other public events. In group settings, if the Sandinistas said something critical about the US, I would not hesitate to take issue. So I did have some access, and sometimes they would try to bait me. It became almost predictable.

I think the Sandinistas viewed my activities as qualitatively different from those of my predecessors. The circumstances were different since we were in a pre-election period and the opposition was accorded a degree of toleration. The main issues in the

Nicaraguan political dynamics were: would there be elections? If so, would the anti-Sandinista parties stand together?—which they had to do if there was any chance of winning. They had to present a unified slate of candidates; multiple slates would have ensured a Sandinista victory. Historically, Nicaragua had divided between liberals and conservatives. But following the Sandinista takeover, traditional alignments had fragmented, and in 1988 there were literally dozens of parties. The Sandinistas of course benefitted from this situation and tried their best to keep the democratic opposition parties divided. The Sandinistas held most of the cards. I urged the opposition to work together as the only way for the democrats to win at the polls; I made no secret of my interest in these democratic parties participating in the Nicaraguan political process. In the end, that is the policy that these parties adopted; they did field a unified slate and won the elections, much to the shock of the Sandinistas and the surprise of most foreign observers.

As I said, early summer 1988 was still in the pre-election period. The Sandinistas had not even made the decision to hold elections. There were some signs that they might agree, but the final decision had not been made. When they finally reached their decision, many factors obviously were weighed. One of them, I believe, was the Sandinistas confidence that they would sweep the elections—without much difficulty. They did not think that the opposition could come together. Agreeing to elections would, moreover, give the Sandinistas a major public relations victory by eliminating one of the major arguments against their regime—that they had not been voted into power in democratic elections. The legitimization of the Sandinistas would, according to this view, at the same time erode the support for the resistance—particularly in the U.S. Congress.

I had contacts with Violeta Chamorro. She was then and is today a very courageous person. In many respects, she was the essence of Nicaragua. She had the ability to bring factions together—she was unique in that skill. There was very broad spectrum of views within the democratic opposition. Almost every leader had a different approach to political organization and objectives. The U.S. government had divided views as well —even the desire to hold democratic elections was an issue. Not everyone agreed that

elections organized by the Sandinistas were a good idea. There was deep skepticism that the elections would be held or that they would be fair even if allowed. There was concern that flawed elections against a divided opposition would just legitimize Sandinista rule—the mirror image of the Sandinista expectation. In the Embassy, we became increasingly convinced that democratic elections should be supported; there was a continuing role for the resistance, but that was primarily to force the Sandinistas to hold elections which would eventually resolve the outstanding political issues. That was our view which we communicated to Washington.

There was also the probability that the resistance, if victorious, might shun the democratic approach and claim the spoils of victory. The resistance had not produced a political cadre; it was a Campesino-based guerrilla army. Some of its commanders and leaders were impressive, but no single leader had emerged—Enrique Bermudez, the top military commander lacked the political skills required. Some of the resistance “stars” had been killed at the beginning of the fighting, including prominent civilian figures. It seemed to me that the political future of Nicaragua, if it were to be resolved through elections, would have to be tackled and decided by local leaders, not by Washington. There were a few potential people, still in Managua, who were not formally part of the resistance, but were associated in people's minds with that movement. These people held the key—they would be the ones to contest the elections.

The Europeans went through an evolution. I had close contacts with all of the diplomatic corps. The major players—the Germans, the Italians, the Spanish, the Brazilians and some other Europeans—were also anxious to find solutions. The Brazilian Ambassador, Sergio Duarte, was one of the most effective diplomats; he was a perceptive observer who became a good friend for many years, including those I subsequently spent in Brazil as Ambassador. I think that the assessment of the Sandinistas by diplomats who had been in Nicaragua for any length of time surely had evolved. With some exceptions, I think most of the major embassies had become disenchanted; they were seeing the same abuses by the Sandinistas that we had observed. Life was not improving for anyone in Nicaragua—

except perhaps the Sandinista top echelon. It was becoming increasing apparent that the Sandinista cadres were behaving very much like the old Somoza cliques. The Sandinista party was a cadre party; at its foundation, there were a hard core that continued to be subsidized by the government. The number of these hard core adherents directly or indirectly on the government's payroll—perhaps as many as 200,000—was almost large enough to ensure that elections would be a foregone conclusion. So the Sandinistas were very much a vanguard party, despite protestations to the contrary. The evils and excesses that flow from an ingrown political system were certainly evident in 1988 for foreign observers and increasingly to the Nicaraguans.

This disenchantment was felt by the diplomats almost regardless of their personal ideology. The living conditions in Nicaragua were not improving and not all of the problems could be blamed on external forces. The assistance that was being provided by many of their countries was not being used effectively, Sandinista management of the country left much to be desired, corruption was growing, vehicles and machinery were rusting from disuse. Countries that had active projects in Nicaragua, like the Germans, were becoming disillusioned and concerned; they were not willing to provide additional assistance when much of what they had already given was being wasted.

Shortly after our July 4 reception, at which I made a brief, but general pro-democracy statement, I was declared persona non grata. So I was in Nicaragua for 90 event packed days. I must say I was somewhat surprised by the Sandinista action. The Sandinistas had accepted me to be the U.S. Ambassador; they knew—or should have known—what they were getting. My views and positions, and those of my government, were no secret. The Sandinista decision to expel me and members of the Embassy staff, I believe, was a part of a broader crack down on the opposition: closing of La Prensa, the main opposition newspaper in Nicaragua; shutting down the last major private enterprise, a large mill; imprisonment of opposition leaders. The immediate cause for these repressive measures was an opposition demonstration in Diriamba, a small town near Managua. The Sandinistas alleged that the U.S. Embassy had orchestrated that demonstration. We had

heard that the opposition would gather there to hold a demonstration. We had also been told that the police would be there in force, which suggested that there might be some clashes. At the time, there was a Congressional delegation visiting Managua. I advised them against going to Diriamba—I was concerned about their safety, but several members of Congress went nevertheless. Since they were insistent on going, I sent the Embassy security officer with them. They went in Embassy vehicles. The photographs that were published the next day in the Sandinista press prominently featured the security officer, arm raised in front of him. The caption stated that he was orchestrating the demonstration. What he was actually doing was motioning to the Congressional delegation trying to get them back into the vehicles to get away from the confrontations. The caption under the photograph read: “US official directing opposition demonstration in Diriamba.” That was manifestly untrue and an outrageous distortion. The Sandinistas must have known that this was a complete fabrication, but they seized upon it as the protest for their expulsion action.

The staff that was expelled included most of the Embassy's reporting officers. We had a small Embassy, and the Sandinistas cleaned out the Political and Economic Sections. The way the expulsions were announced was interesting. Without advance notice, I was summoned to the Foreign Ministry—I received the call at about 3 p.m. to be at the Foreign Ministry in an hour. When asked what the meeting was to be about, the caller was very evasive. We had heard that the press had been notified that an event would take place at the Foreign Ministry at 4 p.m. That information, along with other tidbits, led us to believe that I was going to be subject of the “event.” So I called back and said I would be there, but that I did not intend to be part of a media circus staged by the Sandinistas. I was assured that this was not their intent.

We did some checking around and I became increasingly certain that in fact I would be the center of a “political event.” When I arrived, I was ushered in to see the Foreign Minister and his deputy. They went through the Diriamba affair and other alleged offenses against Nicaraguan sovereignty. The diatribe ended with a statement that I and other Embassy officers were being declared persona non grata. I felt that there was no purpose served by

trying to argue the case. The decision had clearly been made at the highest level. I said only that the action was not warranted and that I thought the regime was making a major mistake—but that was their problem as subsequent events demonstrated. And I left. They did hold a press conference at the Foreign Ministry and vilified the U.S. and me some more. I reported the action taken by the Sandinistas; I then talked to the staff and went to the Residence to pack up.

I then got word from Washington that a plane would be sent to pick me up. I flew out that night on a US Air Force aircraft, stopped in Miami overnight and the next day I had an appointment with President Reagan—after an hour's sleep. I met with the President, Vice President Bush and Secretary of State Shultz and we talked about what had happened. They agreed that the Sandinistas had taken an outrageous action. They were aware of my performance in Nicaragua. By sending a plane for me and by meeting with the President on the next day, they were sending a message of full support for me—which I welcomed. I think the Department has not always been fully supportive of our representatives who have been declared persona non grata merely for carrying out policy and doing their job; it has shown ambivalence at times in such situations. US diplomats who have been expelled have often found that the Department has distanced itself from the individual and left him or her twisting in the wind—never to be heard from again. I find that approach hard to accept; if someone is expelled for good reason, then coolness, or even disciplinary action may be in order. But if someone is expelled for discharging his or her responsibilities as directed by Washington, then the U.S. government should support that individual, as it did in my case.

The six staff members expelled with me were treated well. George Shultz and Elliott Abrams insisted that these individuals were given good onward assignments, and they were. They have all done well in their careers. There was some discussion about retaliatory actions, ranging from breaking relations to much less punitive measures. I argued against breaking relations because I believed that, because the Sandinistas had done something foolish, the U.S. should not follow the same path. The democratic

opposition, under increased pressure from the Sandinistas, needed the support which an Embassy could provide more than ever. The decision was made in Washington that we would respond in kind—expelling their Ambassador and some of their senior diplomats in Washington.

As we walked out of the room where I had met with the President, White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater turned to me and said, “By the way, there is some press waiting to hear from you. You don't mind, do you?” He took me into the press briefing room; it was full—Sam Donaldson, Helen Thomas, and all the rest. It became a full-fledged press conference with me as the “attraction of the day.” I fielded a wide range of questions, mostly focusing on what I had done and whether the expulsion was justified, as claimed by the Sandinistas. It went well, but it was a demanding experience.

Subsequently, I was asked to appear before several Congressional committees to explain what had happened in Managua; I was accompanied by Elliott Abrams. Initially, some of the questioning was quite critical, appearing to accept the assumption that I was expelled because I had done something wrong. I explained in considerable detail what I had done during my 90 days as Ambassador, including things which might have given offense to the Sandinistas. I quoted from the speech—which the Sandinistas found objectionable—I had given at the annual Embassy July 4 reception. I had invited a number of the senior Sandinistas to attend—only a token representative appeared. But most of the major opposition political leaders were there and many members of the diplomatic corps as well. My comments included strong pronouncements supporting democracy, freedom, and individual liberty. I included quotes from George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Thomas Jefferson. The Sandinistas may have considered these quotes to be inflammatory; the U.S. Congress did not. The hearings, particularly the Senate one, remains indelibly stamped in my mind. As the U.S. Ambassador in Nicaragua, I was actively representing my country. For this, I was expelled by the host government and brought before a Congressional Committee in a proceeding which seemed to me to be based on the assumption that I had done something wrong. At least that appeared to me

to be the perspective of some of the Senators—but not all by any means. In the course of the hearing, I had an opportunity to explain what had really happened—including the July 4 speech, which some of the members had been provided to ask about, presumably by opponents of US policy. As I said, I was able to satisfy the Senators about the content of my speech and that my activities in Managua had been entirely transparent. I brought with me copies of the many diplomatic notes that I had sent requesting appointments with every Sandinista cabinet officer. I noted that in some cases, I had received negative replies; in most cases no answer at all.

As I laid out my case, the atmosphere in the hearing room changed perceptibly. In the end, I think the hearings turned out to be quite positive. But the experience of facing some hostile American Senators carrying negative presumptions about the work that I had done in Nicaragua was an eye-opener.

The Administration focused on whether there should be a change in our Nicaraguan policy in the aftermath of my expulsion. The issue was whether we should continue to maintain political pressure for a democratic solution to the Nicaraguan crisis via elections or were there other more direct steps that might be taken—increased military pressure—or should the U.S. just write Nicaragua off? I think wisdom prevailed—we continued on the course we were embarked. It was evident to me that the resistance was an essential element of pressure needed to force and accept democratic elections. There were some within the U.S. government who believed that the Sandinistas would give up power only if they were defeated militarily by resistance forces. I continued to believe that military pressure from the resistance was needed, but that the unified democratic opposition parties in Managua now had been the key to bringing democracy to the country. That was the view that finally prevailed, but I don't think there was ever unanimous support for it in the U.S. government.

Q: What happened to you after the initial whirlwind in Washington?

MELTON: I spent the first few weeks answering questions. I appeared on “Night Line” and other television talk shows as well as radio shows. Then I had to face what to do next. I was asked by Abrams if I were interested in being a deputy assistant secretary in ARA, responsible for Mexico, the Caribbean and regional economical affairs. I told him that indeed I would be—it was a challenging portfolio. So I took that job. I did that from 1988 to 1989—six to nine months.

In 1988, we were entering an election period in the United States. Abrams was beginning to feel the heat coming out of the Iran-Contra investigation. After the election, we had a change in assistant secretaries with Bernie Aronson replacing Abrams and Baker replaced Shultz. Abrams was under increasing pressure by the special prosecutor as were other senior members of the ARA State, both in Washington and the field, who might have been involved in the Contra support operation. It was a difficult period for all of those individuals, but the work of the bureau went on. I talked to representatives of the special prosecutor several times—that was an unusual experience for a career Foreign Service officer. I would not recommend that to anyone else to have that experience, but I did learn a lot about what Ollie North and others had really been doing to support the Contras. A number of my colleagues hired lawyers. I did not. I had done nothing wrong, so why would I require counsel. There was also a question of payment. One does get reimbursement for legal expenses if no negative action is taken against you, but even though you are a government official, you are essentially on your own. The State Department's legal advisor's office defends the institution—not its members—which I found an interesting concept—even when a prosecutor's interest in what you might have done in the line of duty. In fact, whether an officer conducted himself or herself properly in the course of performing official duties is judged ex post facto—which in itself poses some interesting dilemmas. The question of whether someone who is being deposed by a special prosecutor should need legal counsel was very real for me. I did not hire a lawyer.

I spoke to the prosecutors about things that I knew first hand and that I did. But my task was relatively easy because all of the things I had done and knew about were a matter of record. I was asked about some of the statements in memos I had written. I also discussed the organization of the bureau and how the policy making and implementation processes worked. I was not the focus of the prosecutor's attention; I was on the fringes, but I was close enough to see the effect the process had on the lives of those who were targets. I am not saying that the process is wrong—checks and balances are essential—but I certainly noted the toll it took on people. I later read Elliott Abrams' book; it documents well the emotional distress accompanying the process.

As far as my new job was concerned, one interesting aspect of it was that the administration had rediscovered Mexico. The focus was generated by Jim Baker who became Secretary of State in 1989. The center of our policy implementation became the binational commission which met annually. First, we had to review the record to see what the “US/Mexico binational commission” was and how it had been used in the past. It had not been active for some years and both we and Mexicans had to do some homework in order to resuscitate it. It has now become the norm; it meets at Cabinet level annually—sometimes attended by the two Presidents—to review the status of our bilateral relations. 1989 was pre-NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement); the concept was not yet politically acceptable in Mexico—it would have been viewed as another attempt by the U.S. to swallow Mexico. It is interesting to note that this is the direct opposite view of that held by the AFL/CIO which views NAFTA as a serious threat to American labor.

So in this period there was a new awareness of the importance of the relationship with Mexico across the board. Drug issues were becoming increasingly important; DEA agent Enrique Camarena would soon be murdered; Elaine Shannon had just published her book arguing that we subordinated our drug policy to large foreign policy considerations. All of that headline material gave the drug problem more relevance. We worried about corruption and the responsibility Mexican authorities had for the problem—the same range of issues

that are discussed now in deciding whether to certify Mexico as a cooperative partner in the war on drugs. We had considerable hope because it was clear that Mexico was embarked on a major economic development program—liberalization and modernization. But this was only part of the picture. Overall, Mexico loomed larger on the regional and global agenda. The negative aspects of the Salinas administration was not as clear in 1989 as they later became.

We had some concern about the Mexican political system. One of the issues was whether the historically dominant party, the PRI, was becoming more open. Would the opposition parties be permitted to compete on an equal basis with the PRI? Would the election results be honored? The border industries—the Maquiladoras—and the growing cross border economy and cooperation already showed signs of influencing the Mexican political structure by loosening the hold of PRI on the levers of power. Election results were concrete evidence of this change, with the PRI being under increasing pressure; the change was palpable; the only question was whether the PRI would honor the election results. The process in the border regions was viewed as a precursor of possible change in all of Mexico, both politically and economically.

The economic liberalization program was impressive. There were concerns about its staying power, although the evidence seemed clear that it would persist. As I suggested, we had hoped that that economic development would bring political change in Mexico. We were encouraged by early progress, but the outcome was not clear. The tensions between President Salinas and some of the traditional PRI leaders suggested that the political system might well open up. The PRI oligarchy didn't want to honor election results; they didn't want transparency in government operations. As people began to see the possibility of opening the Mexican political system, they also became more interested in raising the US/Mexican relationships higher on the U.S. foreign policy agenda.

It was of course very useful that two Texans—President Bush and Secretary Baker—were in charge of the U.S. foreign policy process; they were interested and had considerable

background in Mexican issues. One of President Bush's daughters-in-law is Mexican. When I went to Mexico as a member of the U.S. delegation to the inauguration of President Salinas, that son was a member of the delegation. The first meeting that newly-elected President Bush had with a foreign dignitary was with Mexican President Salinas.

The Binational Commission handled many of the very sticky problems that affect cross-border relationships—many of them in the environmental area. These included water rights and distribution, sanitation, and pollution. These issues are of great interest to the Congressional delegations from the border states as well as to the governors of the adjacent Mexican states. Bush and Baker, both being from Texas, were quite familiar with these issues and understood their importance. So when the issues arose, in anticipation of the annual meeting of the Commission, they were taken very seriously in Washington.

In the Caribbean, Haiti was already a major issue. “Baby Doc” Duvalier had been deposed and the country was under the rule of General Avril. Our efforts were directed to stimulating democratic elections so that the country would finally be rid of dictatorships. We devoted much time to this effort, but the same issues with which Americans became subsequently familiar were already present in Haiti in 1989. There was an underlying question of how much influence the U.S. really had with the corrupt military and para-military groups which had ruled Haiti for so long. The military was not interested in who ruled; it only worried about who got the spoils. It was a collection of loosely organized gangs which competed in the looting of the country. It was not disciplined enough to avoid bloodshed, even if it was in their interest to do so. It is very difficult to have any impact in a military organization in which the generals were afraid of their troops; frequently when officers made decisions, they would be immediately countermanded by a parallel group in the next room who were monitoring their actions.

So the extent of US influence was very much in question. We had no leverage with the troops, and the commanders could not deliver on any commitments. We could revoke visas, for example, but that was hardly sufficient to bring enough pressure on Haiti to

make a change in their political practices. The economy was already in such trouble that additional economic sanctions had little impact. Furthermore, there was always a question of whether all the elements of the U.S. government would cooperate to implement the policies set by US leadership. That was not as easy as it sounds; you might be told one thing, when in fact the opposite was true. Or if a decision is made, it had to be followed up on to make sure it was implemented. There were US personnel of other agencies who had relationships in Haiti which were not shared with others; information was not volunteered and those that should have known about it were not always informed. We have since made some progress on these problems, but in 1989 these were real barriers.

One of the key issues of the day was whether Congress would appropriate resources to help Haiti's political transition. For example, we had to wrestle with the famous “Flour Mill” case. It was clear that the country's largest flour mill was a source of patronage and corruption. But it was also the base for providing bread for the poor. There were legitimate reasons for not providing resources for this project, but by withholding funds I think we overlooked larger US interests at play in Haiti. The objective of those blocking funds may well have been laudable—i.e. privatization—but at the same time we had to be concerned with the general welfare of the population in addition to supporting a political transition with widespread bloodshed. These goals needed the support of the Congress; we needed PL 480 funds as well as other resources to provide this needed assistance. We found that Congress was not willing to appropriate the necessary resources in part, I believe, because we could not get sufficient attention focused on Haiti within the Executive Branch. I think the price we paid for neglect of Haiti in 1989 was a much greater expenditure in resources a few years later. The problem at the end of the 1980s was, in significant part, one of indifference. That was unfortunate because I think that a modest amount of assistance, given with some flexibility, in 1989 might well have prevented the tragedy of the mid-1990s.

Economic conditions, plus continuing repression, resulted in a large exodus of people —the “boat” people. The same thing can be said about Mexico. If there are inadequate

employment opportunities in a country, people show their displeasure by leaving. In the short term, the Haitian authorities as part of a general agreement with the United States had indicated a willingness to take back their nationals who sought to enter the United States illegally. This was also to our interest. We had to ensure that those returned would not be subjected to human rights abuses; i.e. that returning refugees would be treated humanely. This called for some subjective judgments; to our credit, we have some major organizations in the U.S. dedicated to the welfare of refugees. They form pressure groups which favor liberal immigration into the US. They look for the broadest possible interpretation of the term “political refugee.” Anyone who leaves his or her country is presumably eligible for that status, according to some of these groups. On the other side, the persuasive argument was made that the Haitians were economic not political refugees —that is, they were not leaving because they were being persecuted.

In the final analysis, the U.S. government undertook to monitor the Haitians who were repatriated to ensure that they would not be persecuted. If there was a pattern of abuse following repatriations, then we would have reconsidered this policy. The evidence that was collected did indeed suggest that the vast majority of Haitian refugees were essentially economic and were not subjected to persecution upon their return to their homes.

Although Cuba was not within my area of responsibility, Cuba was a significant player in Central America. We didn't have exactly a fluid dialogue with Castro, but we did have an increasingly productive discussion with the Soviets, some of it about Cuba. I mentioned earlier that we started annual meetings with the Soviets on Latin American issues. We told them that we would continue our policy of isolation towards Cuba, and emphasized that Cuba was becoming an increasing economic burden for the USSR which could probably not be sustained. We suggested that they cut their losses and reduce their support to Cuba; it was a battle that they could not win in the long run. Eventually, they reached the same conclusion as their economic straits became more and more dire. The Soviets did abandon Cuba which had considerable impact on the economy of that country and

its ability to support insurrection elsewhere in the region. It forced Castro to return his people to more primitive conditions rather than opening the economy and running the risk of losing political power. I don't think anyone ever felt that the outcome would be any different; Castro was not going to give up power.

Cuba stood in contrast to the rest of Latin America. The economic situation on the continent looked optimistic. We were looking for ways to mitigate the consequences of the large debt “overhang.” We were in close touch with the U.S. banks that held most of that debt. Our regional economic office was staffed with some very innovative people; we had good relationships with Treasury and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative. We came up with some creative proposals to ease the debt problem. The banks were heavily exposed and were looking for ways to share that exposure—particularly with the U.S. Treasury. Treasury's position, which was endorsed by the government as a whole, was that a weakened US banking system was a risk to the US, to foreign trade, and other global economic goals. So all parties had an interest in finding a solution, not just the banks.

A fundamental change in the US/Latin America dialogue on this issue came when the Latins showed some willingness to move away from their closed economic systems —ironically, as was also happening in the Soviet Union. Salinas' successful efforts in Mexico were leading the way to more open economies as were the efforts undertaken in Chile. Movement towards open economies was building in Latin America which now has sealed the fate of state controlled economies. In 1989, there were signs of change, even though some parts of the U.S. government were a little slow in recognizing it. Some find it difficult to believe that things can change. There are tensions, such as trade disputes, that sometimes obscure the larger picture—the fundamental changes that are taking place in an economy—and therefore opportunities are missed to expedite the transition.

The palpable shift in Latin America toward democratic regimes was beginning to draw attention in Washington. Both economic and political maps of the region gave comfort

to those who had worked for a region of democratic regimes and market economies. More countries were moving in those directions. The possibility of the return of military dictatorships and closed economies was not discussed anymore. A significant change had taken place in the 1980s. On the negative side, as we all know, if things are moving along well, US attention tends to wane. It takes controversy to attract the attention of the President and the Secretary of State.

During my brief period as deputy assistant secretary, I devoted an increasing amount of time to Haiti and our efforts to foster a transition to a democratically elected government there. It was quite disillusioning to go to Haiti to talk to various leaders including the then President General Avril. He would give us commitments which were broken almost by the time we left the meeting room—as his henchmen, representing the views of the troops housed on the grounds of the presidential palace, would force the General to change his mind. It was very unnerving because his agreement meant very little, and we could therefore not find lasting solutions. The civilian elites supporting Avril would focus on what each of them might get out of a deal; “When are you going to pay for this or that?”—e.g. a pension for Mr. X; a subsidy for enterprise. They wanted a guaranteed outcome; otherwise they would not risk any deviation from the status quo, from which they profited at the expense of the Haitian people.

While the military and para-military bands controlled the use of force, traditional elites pulled the strings behind the scenes. So in light of all of these factions and their very narrow agendas, progress was impossible. “Papa Doc” had left Haiti by this time and was ensconced in France—that was one of the triumphs of US diplomacy; he was shuffled off to France. Father Aristide, the future President, was on the scene, but was little known. He had been a dissident Catholic priest who became a political leader. He had differences with the Cardinal and the establishment church. He became an opposition leader, after being deflocked. But in the absence of an open political system, Aristide had no way of demonstrating his political power. I did not get a chance to meet him, but some of my colleagues knew him quite well. He was not seen as a viable option at the time; he was

still decidedly in the second echelon of Haiti's political strata. Furthermore, he had a reputation for being erratic which limited his support among the power brokers in Haiti's emerging democratic sectors.

Q: In 1989, you were nominated to be our Ambassador to Brazil. How did that come about?

MELTON: A few months after my return from Nicaragua, the time came for Bureaus to make their preferences known for upcoming ambassadorial vacancies. A new Assistant Secretary, Bernie Aronson, had come on board, was now leading the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs. I was considered for a number of these vacancies and the conclusion seemed to be that I would be the Bureau's candidate for Peru. That was fine for me, and the long process began. I continued my work as deputy assistant secretary. I got to know Bernie better and better. Somewhere along the line, he decided that he wanted me to stay to be his principal deputy. We talked about that possibility several times. In the meantime, a vacancy had developed in Brazil. After making another effort to convince me to become his principal deputy, Bernie agreed that I should go to Brazil and was delighted to find out that I had been there before and knew Portuguese. So the powers-to-be decided to nominate me for Brazil rather than Peru. That was alright with me, even though I knew that there would be many candidates for one of the most important assignments in Latin America. Some of the candidates were good friends and some thought they were clear shoo-ins. The Bureau's decision to nominate me was a last minute affair; it had the support of people like Larry Eagleburger. So the front runners were swept aside at the last minute; that made for a number of hurt feelings—including among some of my friends who had sought the job.

As US attention turned to Latin America in the 1960s, Brazil was recognized as a potential economic and political force which made it somewhat different from the countries in the region. So the Department decided to train some people to be specialists on Brazil, giving them language and area training and several assignments to that country or in Washington

working on Brazil matters. Steve Low was one of those officers, as was Alan Watson. The cadres developed in this way helped to provide some continuity to our approach. But by the late 1980s, this group of specialists had long since been disbanded; the systematic effort to develop a corps of Brazilian experts had long dissipated. We continue to pay a price for our loss of foresight in this area.

I knew something about Brazil having served there and having done some academic work on that country. So I was very happy to return to familiar territory. I arrived in Brazil on December 11, 1989—and stayed for four years to December 15, 1993. My confirmation process was again a delayed one—such delays had become almost the norm. Senator Helms and the Foreign Relations Committee routinely held up confirmations for one reason or another. Even after I had been nominated, there was an extensive period when no hearings were held—for much the same reason as with my Nicaragua nomination; i.e. Committee members trying to gain some advantage in their dealings with the administration by holding up nominations. So I sat around for months and months waiting for hearings. Once the hearings were held, the confirmation process went rather rapidly. My involvement in Central America matters was raised in the hearings. The “Washington Office on Latin America” and other critics of our policy distributed materials to Committee members opposing my nomination as an alleged “architect” of our “catastrophic Central America policy.” Then there was a story from Brazil repeating an allegation that I had been present at the interrogation and torture of a political prisoner at the Recife federal police station. That story appeared in the Brazilian press and was noticed in Washington.

The Brazilians have an excellent Foreign Service which keeps the government well informed about the State Department and our Foreign Service. They were aware of my involvement in Central America and I think were mildly disturbed by that. When the Recife story came out, they let the story run on to see how it would play out. That was not a normal pattern for the Brazilian Foreign Ministry. At the time, of course, the Brazilian government could have killed the story, if they desired, but in this case, permitted it to run

on. I asked a number of people, including our Charg# in Brazil and a former Ambassador, Tony Motley, what might be done about the story—I had learned that in a confirmation process, the candidate has to take an active role if the outcome is to be positive. The advice was that I should respond firmly to this; that was in any case my inclination as well; so I did. Before doing so, I reviewed my reporting messages from that period and found that the only time I went to the federal police station was when I tried to ensure that two American priests, who had been detained, would not be abused by the police. My record in defense of human rights was directly opposite to the allegations coming from Brazil. So I got the Embassy to issue a brief statement to that effect. I was prepared to provide additional information and to bring forth witnesses from Recife on my behalf—including Archbishop Dom Halder Camera. The story faded and the Brazilian government granted the agr#ment.

In retrospect, I suspect that an informed network was at work against me. It consisted of people who had followed Central America for many years; they were activists both in the U.S. and other countries. Somehow my name had become part of their list of "wanted." Both the Recife story and those given out by the "Washington Office on Latin America" suggest that there was probably some linkage. None of the accusations had any factual basis, and they had no resonance in the Committee once it agreed to consider my nomination and those of others.

Brazil had gone up and down in importance in the U.S. administrations' foreign policy agenda. Henry Kissinger had paid some attention to Brazil. Prior to that, David Rockefeller had also drawn the government's attention to that country. Going back to WWII, a number of special missions had been sent to the region, including Brazil. But US attention to Brazil had been episodic, at best. We were focusing on a new set of issues in Latin America—now known as global issues—e.g. debt, the environment, non-proliferation and perhaps Mexico, all the Latin American countries were heavily involved in all of these issues.

There had been a negotiated debt settlement with Mexico which was a breakthrough. Brazil was next in line; it had the largest amount of debt, which impacted on many US banks. Citibank's foreign portfolio, for example, was heavily weighted towards Brazil.

When I went to Brazil, I had one item on my personal agenda. I was intent in laying to rest the false accusation out of Recife. That was done rather quickly. Although no formal apology was ever made by the accuser, his failure to press the case spoke volumes to the Brazilians. Of greater importance, were the global issues in which Brazil was an important player—debt, trade, nonproliferation (Brazil was a potential nuclear power, had the capacity to produce ICBMs, and was working on a nuclear submarine, and environmental. These were new issues; our past focus on such matters as the democratization of the country had receded to some extent, but remained important.

I arrived in Brazil just before a runoff in the presidential election. The two candidates were a largely untested centrist Fernando Collor de Mello and Luis Ignacio da Silva of the Workers' Party. At one point, about a month before the second round, the polls unanimously predicted a Lula victory. That raised questions about the impact of such an outcome on US/Brazil relations. But in the end, Collar won the election. That opened up some new dialogue possibilities because he had run on a market-based approach to economics which implied policies quite different from those favored in Brazil for decades. So the future looked promising.

Let me talk about trade first. Brazil is a world-wide trader—about one third with Latin America, one third with the US, one third with the rest of the world. It has a very diversified market, with a large industrial sector. It produces millions of automobiles and large quantities of other manufactured goods. Brazil was developing its domestic petroleum industry, although it remained a major oil importer. It had a large steel industry. It was the world's largest exporter of orange concentrate, and a major player in the soybean and

coffee markets, although coffee had receded in importance. So Brazil was a diversified trader and very important in all international trading regimes.

Our trade relationships with Brazil traditionally had been highly contentious. Brazil was protectionist in many sectors, barring US companies from competing in some important sectors. It did not protect intellectual property—at least to world standards. It did not generally cooperate with us in international trade negotiations; on the contrary, it frequently opposed us. So the trade relationship was frequently tense and in some aspects the most contentious part of our overall relationship. Brazil was therefore high on USTR's agenda. Our Trade Representative was Carla Hills at the time. She ran US trade policy —not the State or Commerce Departments. The Embassy worked closely with USTR and Ambassador Hills. She visited Brazil frequently and was personally engaged in negotiations and I think was highly effective. She became a well known personality in Brazil in light of her outspoken efforts to open Brazilian markets.

Ambassador Hills was deeply involved in steel trade discussions. Brazil is a major steel producer. There is an increasing dichotomy in steel production, with the U.S. moving increasingly towards specialty steels. Brazil has followed that pattern as well and is a tough competitor in the specialty steel market. The issue was one of pricing: was Brazil marketing its products at such low costs to warrant the charge of “dumping?” The statistics showed that Brazil was violating GATT rules by “dumping” its products in the U.S. markets. But it was a difficult case, in that Brazilian subsidies were less to a specific industry than to the Brazilian manufactured goods produced for export.

There's a similar issue relating to citrus products. Intellectual property protection was the third major trade issue. Piracy of all kinds was growing in Brazil. Brazil represents a large market for American films and videos. Performances by US entertainers were being reproduced and sold both in Brazil and overseas without payment of royalties. We were successful in negotiating an agreement with Brazil on intellectual property, although it took several years to get it done. Because we made progress, Brazil's unacceptable behavior in

the intellectual property area did not attract nearly as much attention as, for example, our similar problems with China.

The determination of whether a country is “dumping” is complicated. The process is prescribed by US law. The examination of an alleged violation is initiated by a complaint from an American manufacturer, who claims he has been damaged. That is followed by a fact finding period, during which all parties submit data—including the accused foreign manufacturer. That raises the question of sovereignty; Brazil—and others—contended that the prices charged by its producers was Brazil's business and not to be regulated by rules unilaterally established by the United States. Those countries maintained that we were violating their sovereignty, as well as established international norms, and declined to participate in the fact finding part of the process. Soon, they found that such a stance was not in their interest and Brazilian industries began to participate. After the presentation of data by all sides, a judgment would be rendered by an independent US regulatory body. Parts of the process are highly sensitive because, as a regulatory process, the parties are enjoined from using certain kinds of representations—those that might be considered as interference in a regulatory function. That made the process even more difficult for a foreign manufacturer.

A way out of this, of course, was through the establishment of an international process for the adjudication of such trade disputes, acceptable to all parties. GATT processes proved to be too weak. Its successor, the World Trade Organization, represents another attempt.

Coffee had historically been a source of contention, but by the late 1980s, it was far less important than before. Coffee did not account any longer for a major share of Brazil's exports. Efforts had been made for many years to bring some stability to the market; Brazil, as one of the major producers, had an interest in such stability. We had the example of the Organization of Petroleum Exporters, countries which had been a relatively successful cartel—for the first time. The Brazilians continued to harbor the hope that they could duplicate that precedent in the coffee area. The key was Colombia; if Brazil

and Colombia could work together, the Brazilians thought that they would have the lion's share of the market and could then manage prices. Coffee producers, however, are not single minded on pricing which is one of the main reasons cartels don't often work—they lack the necessary discipline. There are various kinds of coffee, and countries tend to specialize in one variety or another, either in the “boutique” market or the mass market. The kind of coffee that usually is found in instant coffee comes most often from Africa. Brazil produces all kinds of coffee; Colombia focuses on specialty beans at the high-end of the market. Those variations tend to drive various countries into positions different from those of their fellow producers. Brazil, within the international coffee organizations, has always attempted to bring the factions together. We as the largest consuming nation had worked out an accommodation with the international coffee organization. But during my tour in Brazil these arrangements broke down. The producers fell in disarray and lost their production discipline—the Brazilian and the Colombians couldn't reach agreement. The consumers were also not united; at one extreme, the Japanese would pay whatever they were asked; they were less concerned about price than they were that the producers would grow the beans which they consumed. The Japanese were the major market for the best beans. The international coffee organization finally reached a crisis point; the producers overplayed their hand and we essentially let all arrangements and agreements expire.

That was not a catastrophic outcome for the Brazilians because, well before this period, coffee had lost much of its relative importance in the Brazilian economy. We in the Embassy, through USTR, were very much involved in the final stages trying to reach an accommodation with Brazil within the international coffee organization. The U.S. negotiator was Myles Frechette, who had been Consul General in Sao Paulo before going to work for Carla Hills. As it turned out, Frechette turned out to be the key US player during the unsuccessful end game. There were a few things such as research that remained after the expiration for a transition period, but essentially the international coffee organization and its attendant arrangements no longer controlled the global coffee market.

Let me talk about debt a little bit. Brazil was the largest debtor to the U.S. banks. There was a vast amount of global debt, but much of it was not owed to American institutions. Our concern was two fold: the impact of the debt by developing countries and the potential impact repudiation of the debt might carry for the international financial system. The international financial system had made its own internal adjustments necessary to prevent a global crisis. So, by the late 1980s, that was a less pressing concern. The impact that this debt had on the financial health of specific US banks with major exposure in Brazil, however, remained worrisome. The banks had reached accommodations with Mexico, leaving Brazil as the major problem. The U.S. government—the Treasury—placed a solution to Brazil's debt very high on its agenda. I worked with David Mulford who was the Under Secretary of the Treasury responsible for the debt problem. Mulford came to Brazil even before the inauguration of President Collor, after the second round of Brazil elections—there is in Brazil as there is in the U.S. a short delay between the final elections and the taking of power by the elected government. We met in private with the Finance Minister-designate, Zelia de Mello and President Collor. We tried to lay the ground work for a cooperative relationship which would encourage a settlement of the debts. The settlement was of course essentially between private American banks and the government of Brazil, which was the guarantor of the debt. But of course there was a question of the role of the U.S. government—Treasury. It was clear that an agreement would require US government support, but at the same time it should not be at the expense of the U.S. taxpayer. The government could promote a dialogue and there were certain actions that it could take to guarantee the final arrangement. But there were other, more direct actions that Treasury could take which would have cost the U.S. taxpayer more than might have been acceptable. So there was a line which the U.S. Treasury could not cross, despite Brazil's and bank's understandable interest in having a third party—the U.S. government—absorb a substantial part of the costs and risks that an agreement might entail. So there were three parties involved in the negotiations all with somewhat different agendas. After a long tortuous process, agreement eventually was reached. There were many ups and downs and many highly emotional sessions attended by Brazilian financial experts and the

American banks, usually led by Citibank which had the highest exposure. We served as facilitators rather than as participants in the negotiations. The Embassy monitored closely all negotiations with Brazil, even when the Embassy was not the lead US government institution. We had a Treasury attach# in the Embassy; I fought long and hard with David Mulford to keep him in Brasilia—Treasury was looking to make some personnel cuts and had targeted its man in Brazil as one of the potential savings. I did manage to get a six months extension, but I was not able to save the position in the long run, once the debt issue was settled.

Let me turn to environmental issues. The focal point, which came about mid-term of my tour, was the UN Conference on the Environment which took place in Rio in 1992. Almost from the day I arrived in 1989, we were pointing towards that conference. We wanted to ensure not only that we made progress on global environmental issues, but that this be done on effective and practical ways. We wanted to prevent the conference from becoming just another forum for the Third World to hit the developed countries over the head—figuratively speaking. Too many global conferences had determined that all the woes of the developing countries were the fault of the developed countries. So all problems in the developing countries should be paid for by the developed countries. Conferences that had been in that mode were well known for their lack of success. We were trying to make sure that the Rio conference would focus on solutions which could actually be implemented.

The fact that the conference was to be held in Rio gave Brazil, as the host country, a vital role not only in the management of the proceedings, but in setting the agenda and determining the issues to be discussed. Brazil was expected to bring things together, as host countries had done traditionally—although no such formal role had ever been assigned to them. Brazil has a very capable Foreign Service, with a global perspective. Brazilian diplomats are at home in multilateral forums. Rio proved no exception.

The central issue was global warming. The key was to reach some accommodation with the Chinese which was and is—and very likely will continue to be—a major global "polluter." It unfortunately uses a lot of soft coal which is environmentally damaging fuel. So the focus was to try to find some solution which would commit China to reducing its output of environmentally damaging gases. In exchange, the developed countries, including the United States, would make parallel commitments.

Other countries were focusing on the U.S. and our practices—in part to divert attention from their own shortcomings. The view of the developing world was that the developed countries were trying to force the approval of rules which would be economically disadvantageous to the Third World—since the developed world had already gone through the environmentally-damaging stages of economic development that the developing countries were experiencing at the time. The developed countries, according to this view, had already used and discarded the basic technologies which were often the highest polluters. The developing countries which were using these technologies resented any efforts to force them to use more expensive and less polluting technologies. Of course, these newer technologies were manufactured in developed countries, further adding to the paranoia of the developing countries which saw this environmental thrust as a new form of colonialism and imperialism designed to block their development. This line found resonance in many parts of the world. So we had to find practical solutions to specific issues to try to avoid this ideological discussion.

We made progress; the conference agenda was shaping up. There was a question of whether the U.S. would participate at all in the conference because of the confrontational stance on the part of some of the participants. Finally, the decision was made that the U.S. would participate. The Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Bill Riley was appointed as the lead US negotiator. He had been the President of the World Wildlife Foundation; so he had good credentials with the environmental community. He came to Brazil on several previous occasions, and he had friends in Brazilian non-governmental

environmental organizations. I got to know him quite well, and we worked together on conference preparations.

The U.S. had a number of environmental projects in its very modest assistance program. We used NGOs primarily to implement these projects. Brazil had been “graduated” from the list of countries receiving assistance; the small residual USAID program tended to focus on global issues like family planning and the environment. That gave us some good contacts in the field in Brazil.

We worked mostly with Bill Riley on preparing for the conference, but we also worked directly with our UN delegation in NY. The global climate change conventions that were due to be ratified became the key issues for the U.S. delegation. The drafts still left some serious problems for us, such as intellectual property rights which were not adequately protected as far as we were concerned. Bill Riley recognized that failure to reach agreement would be a serious blow to US prestige, particularly in the environmental community. He used all of his skills to find an accommodation. He came to Rio on the eve of the conference to see what could be done; we went to talk to the Brazilians. They also wanted an agreement to make sure that the conference would be deemed a success and that could only happen if the U.S. signed the center piece convention on global climate change. The Brazilians had come much nearer on many of the issues and were prepared to work with us to secure an acceptable agreement.

Months before the conference the decision was made that the President would attend, regardless of the outcome of the conference. There had been a debate in Washington on whether the President should come, given that our signature on the treaty was unlikely. President Bush decided—quite rightly, I believe—that the issues to be debated at the conference were major global matters. The U.S. had a legitimate concern about signing an agreement which didn't have adequate protection for American-developed intellectual property. While we kept trying to negotiate a fairer arrangement, not to have participated in a global conference which was attended by almost every nation would have been an

abdication of the leadership role that we had sought to play. In the end we did not get agreement, and President Bush paid a price for this in the 1992 elections. I still think that an agreement acceptable to us could have been reached except for that one unfortunate episode. Even after that, there were efforts to try to breach the differences, but they were doomed to failure. By that time, there was no mediators left.

I had very good contacts in the Foreign Ministry and in the Brazilian government in general. Bill Riley worked with those contacts, especially with the Secretary General who was the policy manager of the Foreign Ministry—a senior career Foreign Service officer. We had a long meeting before the other delegations arrived in Rio. We developed the outline of an accommodation which would have allowed us to sign the agreements. Bill Riley sent back a NODIS (no distribution) message to the White House in which he spelled out the potential accommodation. The next day, that message was on the front page of The New York Times. It had been leaked by the opponents of accommodation in Washington.

The story created great shockwaves in the Brazilian Foreign Ministry. It had been working discreetly behind the scenes, and their work had been exposed by that article. No negotiator wants to be on the front page of any newspaper, much less The New York Times before an agreement has been reached. That article had the effect the opponents intended; it blew the agreement out of the water. There was no possibility after publication of reaching an accommodation. As is typical in such cases, no one admitted that they had leaked. The administration promised to find the culprit in 24 hours; there was the appearance of great concern and activity, but of course no one was ever punished. It was clear in this case, and in many others, that there were only a few people who had access to the leaked information, it should not have been that difficult to find the culprit. But, at least publicly, no one was ever charged.

US representatives, myself included, apologized profusely for this breach of confidence, but that did not prevent, for the rest of the conference, a chill spreading over relationships

with people with whom we had been close. Riley was beside himself; he was greatly embarrassed by this episode and considered what his own actions should be. President Bush called Riley to try to calm the waters; he graciously brought Mrs. Riley with him to Rio on Air Force One. He tried to deal with the situation so that he would not lose Riley's services and still salvage something out of the conference. We continued to look for accommodations; when the President arrived in Rio, he began a series of consultations with the most interested parties, including the NGOs, in order to try to find a formulation which would allow the U.S. to agree to some kind of arrangement. But ultimately, a formula could not be found; the lines had been drawn too sharply. In retrospect, I think an agreement could have been reached had it not been for that leak.

The rainforest is the symbol of Brazil's environmental importance as well as its problems. The rainforest is important because of its impact on global warming; it is a huge area that falls primarily, but not exclusively, within Brazil's borders. The forest is the home for many species of animal life and fauna, some to be found there only. It helps replenish the world's oxygen supply and absorbs pollutants. As the rainforest is depleted—by timber cutting and burning—environmentalists are concerned that this will impact on global warming by reducing the amount of pollutants that the forest can absorb. This cycle makes the preservation of the rainforest a key ingredient in the fight against global warming. The rainforest is also important in the health area because it is the source of extracts that have beneficial effects.

On one level, the rainforest was an important aspect of our negotiations in preparation for the environmental conference. On another, the future of the rainforest was symbolic of the economic development of Brazil. The people who were trying to bring Brazil into the modern economic world saw the rainforest as the key to development of the Amazon basin. If the forest were to be preserved, as the strict conservationists believed, no economic development could be generated in the area. Schemes such as the preservation plans in Costa Rica and other places were seen as unviable in Brazil. The states in the Amazon basin were facing almost the same dilemma that an American county like

Loudon in Virginia is facing today. Developers want to fill the empty spaces with housing and malls; that may not sound environmentally nor acceptable to people already living there. In Brazil, the issue in large measure came down to the political question of what jurisdiction controlled the rainforest. The Amazon states are currently led by people who are pushing development; they view a protected rainforest as an impediment to their goals and believe the “do gooders” who live far away are depriving them of the opportunity to raise their standard of living. The leading Amazonian governor ran on a platform that featured chainsaws—that was his symbol for his successful campaign. It attracted much support in his state—and comparable outrage in many parts of the world. He keeps being re-elected and I think is still the governor today. So the goal is to find an accommodation which would allow legitimate economic development while protecting the environment. In the short term, it is essentially an economic issue because it is very expensive to develop without damaging the environment.

The Brazilians were very conscious of the picture that some environmentalists were painting of their country—scoffers and destroyers of the environment. They made efforts in the pre-conference days, to improve their image. They created the position of the Secretary for the Environment—a Cabinet level position. A well known environmentalist was appointed to the job; he had been a scientist who had made his reputation by finding ways to produce chemicals in an environmentally acceptable way. Everything that he did was carefully calculated to protect the environment. So he was highly respected by the global environmental community. His appointment was certainly an image plus for Brazil, but in the final analysis he didn't have as much an impact on policy development as he, and his supporters, might have hoped. He was another person with whom we had close relationships, particularly in the period leading up to the conference.

The proliferation issue, which encompasses the potential both for the development of nuclear weapons and for their delivery systems, was of great concern to the US. Brazil had the technical know-how and resources to develop both. As is often the case, there were two sides to this discussion. Nuclear energy has peaceful applications as everyone knows;

the Brazilians staunchly maintained that their nuclear programs were directed entirely to peaceful purposes—they had no intent to produce nuclear weapons. They made the same case for delivery systems because that technology can be used for space exploration as well. The Brazilians had aspirations to participate in the commercial development of launch vehicles for such things as communication satellites, which they were also trying to produce. It must be remembered that, even though there is a wide gap between the “haves” and the “haves not” in Brazil, it has the human and other resources to compete in almost every area of science and technology.

What I found when I arrived was that Brazil was embarked on certain nuclear programs. It was also actively engaged in the development of launch vehicles. Our efforts in both areas were intended to get Brazil into the international regimes governing these activities so that some discipline could be imposed in both areas. In the nuclear area, that meant signing the nuclear non-proliferation treaty or an equivalent international understanding. That treaty and associated agreements allow for peaceful uses of nuclear energy; they prohibit any work on weapons or associated military inquiries. The Brazilians took the position then, which they still maintain, that the nuclear non-proliferation treaty was a one-sided arrangement which allowed the members of the “nuclear” club—i.e. those countries which already possessed nuclear weapons—to block any other country from developing its own capacity, not only for weapons, but in the nuclear field generally. In this, they were joined by other potential nuclear weapons states, such as India and Pakistan. The Brazilians reserved the right to test nuclear devices because they maintained that this was necessary for them to develop a peaceful nuclear capacity—which was allowed by the NPT. Even though as a matter of principle Brazil would not sign the NPT, it claimed it was already abiding by its provisions.

The U.S. position initially was to say that countries that did not sign the NPT could not expect any cooperation in the nuclear field. Over time, we moderated our view and decided that there were other ways to prevent proliferation beyond the confrontational stance that we had taken. Diplomacy is the art of finding satisfactory bridges between

seemingly unreconcilable positions. The Treaty of Tlatelolco, named for the Mexican Foreign Ministry building in which it was signed, is a hemispheric nuclear non-proliferation agreement. The tenets of that treaty are compatible with the NPT. It became increasingly clear that, if Brazil would ratify the Treaty of Tlatelolco, then our objectives would be largely met. So we shifted to pressing the Brazilians to ratify the Tlatelolco Treaty. Eventually, the Brazilians did ratify the Tlatelolco Treaty, whose terms they continue to abide by.

My role in this area was first of all to convince Washington of the realities on the ground, including urgings to expand our perspective to include regimes other than the NPT to accomplish our purposes. Eventually, when the U.S. modified its position, our role was to convince the Brazilians to ratify the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which they had already signed. There were a lot of obstacles to this strategy; the possibility of using another vehicle to achieve some kind of control on Brazil's nuclear program had never been thoroughly examined. One of the reasons was an unresolved question about the implications of the Tlatelolco Treaty for nuclear power outside the hemisphere, but with territories within the region—the United States, the UK, and France. The other question concerned Cuba and what role it might take. Could you have a nuclear regime in the hemisphere without Cuba's participation? These were challenges that had to be overcome, but they were not insurmountable, once people accepted, in principle, that this was a viable alternative which could achieve US objectives on non-proliferation.

There were some in Washington, the “true believers,” who were opposed to any flexibility on proliferation issues. The two aspects—weapons and delivery systems—are intimately related. People involved in these two fields tend to be the same people. Experts on strategic delivery systems also tend to be experts on weapons. Those who had traditionally guided US policy in this area still looked for certainty in this area. If they were satisfied with arrangements for weapons control, then they would move quickly to delivery systems to ensure complete satisfaction there. They insisted that every aspect of

both complicated issues be settled before they would agree to anything. It was a strategy calculated to block any progress in an area where certainty is the most illusive commodity.

What we in the Embassy were trying to do is to take small steps, one at a time, which eventually might lead to a comprehensive agreement. We had a very pragmatic approach. There was no difference between the “purists” and ourselves on the final goal—bringing Brazil's nuclear and space launch programs into an international control regime which would have restrained the use of technologies for non-peaceful uses through a system of inspections and other internationally supervised control mechanisms. I don't think Brazil was ever viewed as a wanton destabilizer with aggressive intentions, but it was potentially capable of transferring dangerous technology to other less peaceful parties whose purposes might have been inimical to the US.

Let me turn to other subjects. Human rights issues were always on the agenda, with excesses being committed by the Brazilians—as they are still being perpetrated today. Brazil is a huge country organized along a federated system. Much of the law enforcement falls on the states and the municipalities. The reality in Brazil is that the writ of authority does not reach down to the local level in many parts of the country. The excesses almost uniformly are committed by local authorities—if authorities are involved at all. We encouraged in those cases an extension of federal authority in order to hold local authorities accountable for any deed within its jurisdiction. We went to the Minister of Justice, Jarbas Passarinho, to seek his intervention because, under some circumstances, he could invoke federal authority and jurisdiction in human rights cases. In other situations, we pushed the state or the municipality by dealing directly with officials at those levels to try to get them to take remedial actions—in addition to urging federal authorities to be more vigorous in their pressure on state and local officials. Our interventions were not always welcomed by the Brazilians; we were after all interfering in domestic affairs of a democratic country. But human rights are also internationally recognized under the UN charter, and therefore an obligation of all states. That was a constant theme during my tour. In dealing with Brazilians there are certain issues in which the U.S. has to stake out

its position and make that position, popular or not, eminently clear to all. What I and my staff tried to do is to make sure that people knew where we stood through press releases, public statements, speeches, and other tools of public diplomacy. For example, I would regularly write Op Ed pieces which were published in major Brazilian newspapers. We tended to focus on the Rio and Sao Paulo press which were widely read, and quoted in all parts of the country. I must have written dozens and dozens of these articles—almost on a monthly basis. That got our message out; these pieces were read by the authorities, who would frequently give me feed-back, particularly if they objected to my views. I was very careful in preparing these Op Ed pieces so that I could stand behind every word expressed.

In addition to public diplomacy, we worked very hard behind the scenes—in private—to advance US positions. Diplomatic conversations were strictly private; my interlocutors had to know what they said to me would not find its way into the public domain. As they saw that their confidences were respected, their trust in me increased. They may have preferred to have a less public American Ambassador, but eventually they accepted that this was part of my modus operandi. But having observed that their comments to me remained private, they became increasingly frank; we covered all issues in the most candid and bluntest fashion and no offense was taken because the officials knew that these were the views the U.S. presented in an unvarnished fashion. I think that was an effective way to conduct business. We obviously did not always see eye to eye. For example, toward the end of my tour, there was an egregious human rights case involving Indians in the northern states—apparent complicity by local authorities in murder and torture. We consulted with other diplomatic missions with an interest in human rights. I told the Brazilians that we would be sending an Embassy officer to monitor the situation on the ground. I sent her to Amazonia; she was accompanied by a representative of the British Embassy. When they arrived at their first departure point near the site of the incident, the local authorities blocked them from reaching their first destination; they were “detained” which brought a major and instant protest from us. Initially, the Foreign Ministry reacted

very negatively—our action was an “infringement of Brazil's sovereignty.” Eventually, the Ministry backed off; we had established our principle and would not back off. So there was always some tensions in our relationships with the Brazilians on such issues. The Embassy was set on promoting and defending US interests; the Brazilians did not always embrace that role, but I think in the end they accepted our advocacy as reasonable and appropriate, even if it made them uncomfortable.

Many observers, including me, view the Brazilian Foreign Service as one of the world's best. It is an elitist service, recruited from a large population. It is relatively small, by US standards—in the hundreds, not thousands. Traditionally, the officers are selected from the upper class. The requirements in academic attainment, including fluency in at least two languages, are very high. In addition a Brazilian Foreign Service officer can expect to go through a rigorous diplomatic training program before he or she reports to the first assignment. They are tested before each promotion. Great emphasis is placed on language skills, which reinforces Brazil's emphasis on multilateral diplomacy. In addition to Washington and a few other major world capitals, the key assignments in the Brazilian Foreign Service are Geneva and New York—centers of international organization activities. The fast track for Brazilian Foreign Service officers is through assignments to Brazilian missions to international institutions. Brazil continues to assign its “best and brightest” to these posts. As a consequence, Brazilian senior Foreign Service officers are extremely knowledgeable about global issues and very much at home with multilateral diplomacy. A Brazilian Foreign Service officer, after several years of service, can be assigned to any of these multilateral organizations and find himself or herself immediately productive because there is virtually no learning curve. They are already familiar with the organization and usually know the staff well from previous assignments. Those elements combine to give the Brazilian Foreign Service its world class status; they are proud of that standing and work hard to maintain it.

While in Brazil, I was witness to some of the ramifications of the reunification of Germany. The East German Ambassador was recalled and the former West German Ambassador

hosted the combined—East and West—German national day. The Soviet Embassy was our near neighbor; it was in a state of disarray as events unfolded in East Europe and the USSR. The staff was wondering what would happen next and what the future would hold for them. At the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Soviet Embassy was staffed by old line communists—at least that is what we thought. They turned out not to be so “old line” as policies changed rapidly in Moscow. The broad common interest asserted itself very, very rapidly between our two embassies. The Ambassador stayed on—I assume because there was so much turmoil in Moscow that restaffing the Embassy in far-off Brasilia was not a high priority. There was a draw-down in Russian Embassy staffing; as people left, they were not replaced. They had severe budgetary problems and little guidance from the Kremlin. We in fact became an element of stability, if not support, for our neighbors. I became a close colleague of the Russian envoy, who stayed on even after the dissolution of the USSR. All very ironic.

The events in Eastern Europe had a definite impact on the Brazilian political landscape. The Marxist parties, which had been around for a long time and tended to mirror the fissures in the communist world—hard line vs soft line—became rudderless as Moscow's leadership faded. An internal split took place. The minority of the “old line” spouted their ideology as if nothing had happened in Moscow. I refer to such people as Oscar Neimeyer, the architect of Brasilia and a die-hard communist, who never changed his views of the way the world should work. Then there was Ignacio Lula de Silva, the defeated Workers Party presidential candidate, and some of his party cadres who were quite unsure about how to react to Gorbachev and glasnost. They wanted to retain the Marxist underpinning to the state; they did not change gracefully. The orthodox communists were even more uncomfortable with events in Moscow and Eastern Europe. Their script had relied heavily on the existence of the Soviet Union; when the USSR collapsed and was not followed by another strong communist stage, the Brazilian communists became disoriented; they are probably still today looking for their agenda. For the Brazilian left, more generally, the demise of the Soviet Union demanded a long-overdue reevaluation of some of its own

assumptions about the role of capitalism and its relationship to political freedom. This process continues.

An aspect of this process was the relationship of leftist parties to the U.S. Embassy. Even before my arrival, I had been the subject of scurrilous allegations by a member of the Workers Party. As was my practice, whenever I was assigned, I scrupulously tried to be in touch with as many different segments of the host country's society as possible. In Brazil, I wanted the Embassy to have as wide contacts as possible, regardless of their points of view. The Workers Party was a democratic party; we made special efforts to reach out to it. Our labor attach# had very good contacts with the Workers Party; he did a good job of dispelling some of their misconceptions. Party leader “Lula,” however, was still reluctant to be seen in public with the American Ambassador. I tried to call on him when I arrived in Brazil; he was “unavailable.” Eventually, he became available—perhaps due to intense party reassessments following the collapse of the USSR.

As I mentioned, the environmental conference was the zenith for official visits. There were numerous delegations from the US: President Bush and his large official party, Senator Gore and his Democratic delegation, a bipartisan Senate delegation, and a similar House delegation. Everyone wanted to be involved in the environmental event of the decade. But each wanted his or her own moment in the sun—not to be shared with any other delegation. So we were spread rather thin trying to support all these various groups. But aside from that tidal wave of visitors, throughout my four years in Brazil, we did not lack for visitors. President Bush came several times. The U.S. delegation to the Collor inauguration was headed by Vice President Quayle—who also came several times. We had a number of Senators—e.g. Bill Bradley (D-NJ), Orrin Hatch (R-Utah). We had Cabinet officers come—e.g. Lloyd Bentsen (Treasury). Then there were many members of Congress—e.g. Dan Rostenkowski.

The Rostenkowski visit was quite memorable. He was heading his House Ways and Means Committee, which is a large group, all of whom came. The Chairman was known

for the discipline that he demanded of his Committee—one of the last of the “old style” chairmen. If Members did not participate as he expected, he or she was told that they would not be welcome for other events on the schedule. There were several situations like that during the Committee's visit. In one, a breakfast meeting I particularly recall, was scheduled by the Chairman, but very few Members showed up after a long day previously. They were frozen out of meetings for the rest of the visit. He ran his Committee with tight discipline.

But I must also note that there was an element of personal discomfort for me associated with that visit. The U.S. Executive and Legislative Branches operate by different rules—what is acceptable for a representative of one may not be acceptable for a representative of the other. There is some merging of standards now, but there are still differences. For example, what a Congressman may accept from a supporter is different from what an Executive Branch representative may accept. These differences were highlighted during the visit to Rio by the Ways and Means Committee. The Chairman and Committee members accepted gratuities, in the form of a golf outing arranged by US corporate sponsors, which probably would have crossed the lines for an Executive Branch employee. I have a picture at home with me standing with President Collor and Chairman Rostenkowski—one was impeached and the other sent to prison for ethics violations.

I might comment briefly on my relations with President Collor. Prior to winning election Collor's public experience was limited. He served as governor of a small northern state. He had gone to university in Brasilia, which broadened his exposure to public life to some degree, but he had essentially lived on the periphery of the Brazilian political scene. Not yet 40; he was very telegenic. He entered into a close relationship with Brazil's leading communication entrepreneur, who controlled the world's third largest media empire. Those facilities were made available to Collor who used them to articulate a reform message which was eagerly received. In the preliminary rounds leading up to the elections, he swept past all of his better known competitors who, by comparison, were perceived as old, traditional, tired, worn-out politicians. So Collor ran and won as an outsider. He had his

political debts, which were larger than anyone realized at the time. But he looked like a fresh breeze which was underscored by his appointment of new people to key positions. He challenged the status quo; for example, he presented a fairly radical economic program to Congress and asked for immediate approval. But he quickly ran into difficulty because the basic political structure of the country remained unchanged; it was still a federal system with the power residing in the Congress and at the state level. The Brazilian President does not have any authority over Congress; he cannot force measures upon it. That makes reform hostage to a bargaining process with Congress, and the Congress demanded a high price.

Collor was personally stand-offish. I made great efforts to develop a relationship—to open direct channels. He was reluctant to join in. The Foreign Ministry supported this arms-length relationship because it wanted ambassadors to work through it—not unlike foreign ministries the world over. Brazil is a large country with an exceptionally strong Foreign Ministry—far more influential than our own Department of State. In Brazil, it is not the norm for an ambassador to have ready access to the President as might be true in smaller countries. As in the US, the Brazilian President has a large staff to filter information and control access and to support him. Some of my colleagues in the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs could never seem to understand that norms for contact in countries like El Salvador and Honduras were not also approachable in Brazil.

Difficulties notwithstanding, I made a major effort to ensure that we had the kind of direct communications with President Collor that I thought were required. I did not want to see him every day; I just wanted to be able to reach him on those occasions when I or Washington thought direct access was required. But I must say that it took a full year to develop the kind of access that I thought was desirable—the “door guards” were very active and wouldn't let anyone through. It was not a situation in which others were allowed access which was denied to me. Far from it, diplomats were seldom received. I probably had the best access in the corps. In retrospect, that Presidential closed circle may have been connected to processes that were not evident at the time; the palace “guards” may

have been trying to shield some unsavory aspects of the Collor administration, which eventually did become public.

Collor was young and impressionable, particularly by riches and imperial grandeur. He allowed the unchecked flow of funds during the campaign to continue on after his victory. The unsavory campaign fund-raising methods were continued after Collor took power; they then became graft and corruption. The campaign agents continued to take their cuts. Eventually, the Collor fund-raising system collapsed and he left the Presidency in disgrace.

The Brazilian media is evolving. Traditionally, the media has been very influential. With some exceptions, it has been a strong supporter of democratic practices. The largest papers were family owned and generally regionally focused. There are large papers, based in Rio or Sao Paulo, which are becoming national journals. Like most things in Brazil, the media “heavy hitters” are now located in Sao Paulo—and increasingly are finance and culture. The political power is still dispersed within the federal system, which gives rural areas and less populous states disproportionate leverage. In other fields, the power is moving south towards the industrial, business, and financial powerhouse of Sao Paulo. So we had to build a relationship with the Sao Paulo power brokers. That places great responsibility on our consul generals in Sao Paulo and to a somewhat lesser extent, Rio. That makes it very important to have able principal officers at those constituent posts; in fact, we have assigned former ambassadors or ambassadors-to-be to Sao Paulo, which makes it unique. I like to describe Sao Paulo as a combination of New York and Chicago in their relationship to Washington. We have been fortunate in that our recent CGs in Sao Paulo have been officers of stature and competence. As it should be, the Consulate General in Sao Paulo is now the largest and most important constituent post in Brazil.

Rio had become less significant and that is reflected in the recently reduced staffing of the post. I think there was and may still be more support staff in Rio than actually required, but that is the lag effect—even after 30 years—of moving a capital from one city to another; the post which used to be the embassy tends to remain over-staffed.

It is of course frustrating for an ambassador to be residing in the capital when the vast majority of the country's economic, political, social and cultural fabric is being woven outside of it. Even frequent travel does not compensate for the isolation of Brasilia; you just cannot stay in sufficient touch with all parts of the country. So you have to adopt a strategy which in the first place clearly spells out your objectives—what is your agenda?; then you focus on those goals using public diplomacy as an indispensable tool. Secondly, you have to effectively use the constituent posts; they have to be part of the U.S. diplomatic program and must act in full coordination with other US establishments in the country. No constituent post can act on its own agenda. That may lead to communication problems; there has to be clarity as to who is doing what and how the work of each fits into the overall U.S. effort. The key to coordination is an effective communication system between the ambassador and the principal officers in the constituent posts.

Communications were increasingly easier from Brasilia, but the distances between the capital and the major centers in Brazil are still great and flights take several hours. We had a small Defense Attach# aircraft—a C-12—which was sometimes available, but was never intended to be a substitute for commercial transportation. It was there primarily to permit Defense Attach#s to travel to remote areas—which was useful on such a vast country. But a chief of mission just can't be everywhere; it is a mistake to think that his or her role is to see and be seen in all of the 26 states of Brazil. To do so would be to abdicate other more important responsibilities. What I tried to do was to limit my travel to those cities and areas which were most relevant to our policy agenda. That took me most frequently first to Sao Paulo; then to Rio; and perhaps next, to the Fortaleza, the capital of Ceara in northeast Brazil. Ceara had a progressive government, and was the center of innovative activities in the economic and human rights area with which we wanted to be associated. By our presence, we wanted to indicate support for the ongoing initiatives. We hoped that in this way we would convey a message; in the Brazilian context, that was another effective way to let people know where we stood.

The sheer size of Brazil makes it a world power—at least in Brazilian eyes. Brazilian foreign policy focuses on global issues. Brazilian diplomats viewed Latin America as a potential restraint on the country's aspirations to play a global role. At the same time, Brazil wanted to be seen as the leader of South America. Its main rival was Argentina, but increasingly, Brazil's sheer size has made it the 800 pound gorilla in the region. It will almost inevitably be the dominant voice in South America. That fact translates into US concerns; for example, in the trade area, we had competing views on how the trade system in the region should be organized. Building on the North America Free Trade Area (NAFTA), we planned for an eventual hemisphere-wide free trade area. The Brazilians believed that these free trade plans were moving far too rapidly and that they would inevitably lead to the destruction of Brazil's protected industries, leaving the U.S. as the dominant economic engine in the region. Brazil preferred to start with a southern common market—Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay—led by Brazil. That common market, once consolidated, would be expanded to cover the rest of South America. Only then would negotiations be initiated with NAFTA—bloc to bloc, with Brazil facing the United States as an equal across the table.

The establishment of NAFTA opened a breach between Mexico and Brazil, which has not yet fully healed. Brazil had a rude awakening when Mexico joined NAFTA, because the foreign offices of both countries had previously collaborated on so many world and regional issues. Both had viewed management of the relationships with the U.S. as one of their primary foreign policy goals. The increasingly friendly relations between Argentina and the US, the Chilean economic renaissance, and the new Mexican economic relationship with the U.S. and Canada forced Brazil to rethink its approach to the region. But still for the Brazilians the focus remained largely a global one. They were particularly interested in the new WTO (World Trade Organization). They believed that a strengthened multilateral trade organization would provide Brazil a stronger voice, particularly in the settlement of trade disputes. Brazil's objective here was to put an end to unilateral actions by the United States, such as the anti-dumping sanctions.

The Brazilians viewed the OAS in much the same light; the Latins must form a bloc and deal with the U.S. from strength. In general, the Brazilian diplomats believe that only a united Latin America—led by Brazil—can successfully counter the U.S. will to dominate. Only if there is solidarity among the Latin American countries can they get a fair shake from the US.

Before we leave this discussion of Brazil, I might briefly comment on “Operation Topsy.” This was an initiative that was begun in the 1960s by Ambassador John Tuthill and his Executive assistant, Frank Carlucci. The name came from Uncle Tom's Cabin, it was intended to characterize a process in which the U.S. mission just “growed like Topsy” with no central purpose in mind. It was an accretion of agencies and personnel with a minimum of planning relating resources to policy objectives. So Tuthill identified this as a problem; it was a waste of resources, and it was an impediment to the achievement of US objectives. The Embassy was just too large. The Ambassador undertook to analyze the staffing against US objectives in Brazil. Carlucci was the action officer on this project. Tuthill made significant progress while he was Ambassador which coincided with my initial arrival in Brazil. Eventually, this effort ran out of gas as it ran up against bureaucratic imperatives; e.g. the era of large AID missions (Brazil at one time was the largest recipient of US assistance and the center-piece of the “Alliance for Progress”). This effort brought a large increase in US personnel and gave significant autonomy to the AID mission director. When I was in Recife, there were some 200 Americans in the AID mission in northeast Brazil—as compared to the 3 Foreign Service officers. By the time I became Ambassador, more than 25 years later, the AID mission had been cut down to a small office in Brasilia to monitor the final phases of the assistance program—less than 6 people to manage a program of between $10-$20 million, with most of the accounting done in Washington. The aid program had been all but terminated following the US/Brazil disputes of the 1970s; military assistance was eliminated entirely and other assistance began a phase out process.

Brazil was never a center for assistance to other countries in the region because it was so different from its Latin American neighbors—language being the most prominent, but by no means the sole difference. Brazil does not see itself as strictly a Latin American country, as many countries in the region do. Despite its leadership aspirations, it has never been a regional center, unlike Uruguay and others that aspire to that role. Brazil did effectively project its interests in the region, but its focus was always beyond Latin America.

Q: You finished your tour in 1993. What happened next?

MELTON: I was assigned to the Office of Inspector General and for two years led an inspection team. Then I became Assistant Inspector General in charge of all inspections. I subsequently was named Deputy Inspector General, the senior Foreign Service position in the Office of Inspector General. The office has four divisions: inspections, audits, investigations, and security and intelligence oversight.

The Inspector General has a broad mandate which, in practice, is only limited by his or her self imposed limitations and the Congressional oversight process. Inspections are policy based; they also look at waste, fraud, and mismanagement, but the principal focus is policy and resource management. In an overseas inspection, the first item for discussion is what the U.S. is trying to accomplish in a particular country. Then the team looks at what tools are available to reach these ends—and the resources reasonably allocated to advance US goals and objectives. Are the chiefs of mission and his or her country team adequately managing the resources available to them in a coordinated way, across agency lines?

There is a significant element of the Office of Inspector General devoted to security issues, including intelligence oversight. This unit conducts separate inspections of the security readiness of our overseas establishments as well as of Washington entities. They use very precise guidelines to determine whether posts are taking all necessary and prudent steps to resist security threats—including possible terrorist attacks.

Inspections of the domestic and overseas activities of the Department is the oldest function of the OIG. Within the Department and the Foreign Service, it is certainly the one that is best known and probably best regarded. The other functions of the Office contain more seeds of conflict—e.g. the Office of Investigations which has law enforcement responsibilities and can make arrests and referrals for prosecution. The Office of Audits, which is the largest division of the Office of Inspector General, has a longer term perspective and focuses on systemic issues. Of all the OIG activities, those carried out by the Office of Inspection are viewed most favorably by the Foreign Service if my own experience is any guide. The Office of Inspection has also been mentioned favorably by the American Foreign Service Association, which has criticized other OIG functions, such as investigations, on due process grounds.

Because I had served as head of a Class 1 mission—the largest—I was initially given the job of leading inspections of large missions. One of the precepts of inspections is that they are carried out by those with at least 2 comparable level of experience of those being inspected. So recruiting team leaders is not easy if you want quality officers. It has not traditionally been a stepping stone for onward senior assignments; that is not all bad because you need people with independent judgment which often comes when an officer is not concerned with his or her next assignment or promotion. As soon as I reported for duty, I prepared myself for a series of inspections. The first one was Egypt, which is our largest mission—primarily because of the size of our assistance program which is a byproduct of the Middle East peace process. It is not quite as large as Israel's program, but at $1.2 billion per year is quite large. That amount is divided into security assistance and development assistance. The program has specific requirements, but in the final analysis, since the total is mandated by Congress, the funds are eventually transferred to the Egyptians. The Israeli program, by contrast, is basically a cash transfer program, but the totals in both are established by legislation.

The main issue in our inspection centered on assistance. How can an assistance program be managed effectively when the program managers cannot, in practice, hold the aid recipients to real performance standards. We found that it was very difficult to build a program from the bottom up when Congressional “earmarking” determined both the size and in many instances the content of the program. (An “earmark” is a program level specified in a Congressional act for a specific purpose or country.) The Egyptians knew full well that they would receive the full amount appropriated; so that meaningful conditions for the assistance were difficult to establish. The Israeli program which is also “earmarked,” is more straightforward in this regard. Once a year a check is written out to the Israelis for the amount Congress appropriated. The Israelis decide how the money will be spent without USAID intermediators. The Egyptian program is far more difficult to manage since the bulk of the funds are program and project related. So there has to be bilateral agreement on each program and project. This gives US managers a degree of leverage, in that they can steer funds to those Egyptian entities most likely to comply with program requirements. But the leverage is diminished—and in some cases eliminated—by the knowledge that the amount appropriated will be obligated by the end of the fiscal year, under any circumstances—if necessary by transfers for balance of payments support with minimal conditions.

It is a frustrating situation. Political imperatives drive the program almost regardless of the impact on economic development in Egypt. This is not a sound approach; it tends to demoralize those responsible for program management. Knowing that all of the funds will eventually be provided, there is a tendency to soften the conditions for the transfer of resources for programs which, under normal circumstances, might not be funded. The U.S. bureaucracy has not performed very admirably; it is true that Egypt's pivotal role in the Middle East peace process was the principal justification for the large assistance program. But program standards should be maintained as well. Rather than pressure program managers in the field to arbitrarily relax or ignore conditions previously established, the funds either should be withheld or reprogrammed, one or the other.

Congress carries a major share of the responsibility for this situation for the manner in which the legislation is written. In our report, we discussed these issues and posed the dilemma to the Secretary of State, and the AID Administrator.

One of the problems at the time was that the Office of the Inspector General itself was undergoing changes. Sherman Funk, who had been the Inspector General for a long time had retired and the new Inspector General had not yet been appointed. So the Office was not in a good position to take on controversial issues, even though inspection teams continued to pose difficult questions, as in the case of Egypt. We presented recommendations; the first one dealt with the issue I have just discussed. We did not blame the “earmarking,” but rather the Executive Branch's response to that Congressional mandate. We tried to get the Department and USAID to face up to this issue working with the NEA and USAID leadership. But since our own Office was not as aggressive as it might have been in pursuing the issue and in light of the bureaucracy's reluctance to deal with such politically charged issues, the recommendations did not produce the response they should have. There was some discussion and eventually there was some reprogramming of a portion of the Egyptian funds to other purposes, but I think that the real reason for this action—a first time for the Egypt program—was general Congressional reduction in AID funds rather than an explicit decision to accept our recommendations.

Egypt desperately needed economic reform. It is almost axiomatic that, if a country does not have a good macroeconomic regime, specific programs designed to promote economic development objectives are going to be undermined at best, or more likely, will be entirely ineffective because of a country's deficient macro politics. The Embassy and the USAID mission quite rightly were focusing on macroeconomic objectives and working with the Ministry of Finance to achieve them. It was equally clear that the Egyptian government did not place microeconomic policy reform very high on its agenda. It focused more on the political process of satisfying constituencies and balancing various domestic pressures. The government was facing the beginnings of domestic opposition; it had a

fierce program of repression, particularly against those elements perceived as domestic terrorists. Human rights was a real issue.

An example of the problems created by this assistance process would arise when the Embassy engaged the Ministry of Finance to discuss the conditions that had to be met before funds would be transferred. Close to the end of the fiscal year, it was clear to the USAID administrators that the conditions were not going to be met. Since the money would have to be provided at some time in accordance to Congressional mandates, the administrators were faced with the question of whether they should continue to deal with the Ministry of Finance in the hopes that a few more targets might be met or whether to insist on a renegotiation of the agreement which would include only conditions that the administrators knew could be met—a face saving device. What evolved over time was a preemptive strategy; the USAID administrators would increasingly negotiate with Egyptian officials outside Finance in whom they had confidence and who they thought would meet the conditions to be included in the agreement. This strategy almost ensured that our aid had less and less relevance to the macroeconomic issues with which the Ministry of Finance wrestled. The issues that the administrators would focus on, while important, were not central to the management and reform of the total Egyptian economy. On the other hand, that strategy ensured that targets in specific agreements would be met. But as noted, those targets became less meaningful as the macroeconomic issues were not dealt with.

That then is the problem which we highlighted in our report, but as I said, we were only modestly successful in having the Executive and Legislative Branches deal with it. We were not encouraged to talk to the Congressional staffers, in part because the Office of Inspector General was in a state of transition, although we were more aggressive in circulating and defending our findings than perhaps the Office may have desired. But in the final analysis, the decision was made not to follow up on our recommendations. In the normal inspection procedure, the teams are quickly reassigned to another set of inspections after they have completed their reports on their previous inspections. The team

therefore did not have the time to follow up on its recommendations. Follow-up is left to the Office, which tends to be less engaged.

Meaningful assistance to Egypt is difficult enough. It is a country which had limited arable land—essentially along the banks of the Nile. It has a tremendous population growth which makes economic development increasingly difficult. And finally, it is beset by corruption which is endemic. Without some meaningful resolution of these challenges, assistance programs will only have a very limited effect on Egypt's development.

After Egypt, I went with my team to the Philippines. The central issue there was the ability of the staff to manage a large mission. For example, we were concerned by the environment of corruption that existed in the Philippines, which inevitably impinges on the operations of a US mission. Consular operations especially are at great risk—the pressure to secure entry documents to the U.S. through fraudulent means is very high. The Chief of Mission faces major challenges in attempting to deal with an empire that includes some very esoteric US agencies, many of them the relics of our historical involvement in the Philippines—e.g. the Battle Monuments Commission, Veterans Administration, Social Security Administration. There are annually hundreds of millions of dollars of transfer payments to Philippine citizens by these agencies. Fraud remains a major concern in all of these areas.

We ran into serious mismanagement problems in the Consular Section which subsequently led to the indictment in federal court of a senior Foreign Service officer. This problem raised the question of the oversight role of the Chief of Mission and the functioning of the internal process of the mission to ensure that the Ambassador is fully informed and, therefore, in a position to take timely action if required. In the Philippines, we found that the Ambassador was not so informed and therefore could not take action. When he was advised, he took action.

We found that the consular problem was generated by the high value of an entry visa to the US. That put a great pressure on consular officers. The high premium that Filipinos put on these visas, plus widespread acceptance of bribery as a normal cost of doing business, made this an obvious area of vulnerability. A consular officer had to be especially alert to signs of fraud. In the case of the Consular Section of our Embassy in Manila, internal controls which would have assisted consular officers in detecting fraud were not in place. Operations did not meet the standards of the consular handbook, which is the blueprint for the operations of a consular section. Had these guidelines been followed, the problems that we uncovered—and those that reappeared subsequently—would not have arisen.

That said, we found the junior officers in the Consular Section to be of high quality. Not all were happy to be in Manila; the workload can be quite grinding. The problem was more at the mid to senior grades, including some who had been in Manila before or were drawn there for self aggrandizement. There was, for example, distressing evidence that sexual favors may have at times been offered to mission personnel in exchange for preferences, particularly in the consular area. If employees allow themselves to become engaged in such activities, it can quickly erode the fiber of a mission—across the board. We found that the usual mix—gender, race, etc—one finds in a mission was absent in Manila. There were relatively few female officers and staff; there was in fact a self-selection process which returned people to the Philippines who had served there before; there was also a high proportion of male officers and staff who had left their spouses in the States. The mission therefore was almost 100% male. The Department's personnel system was aware of this skewed staffing, but went along with it in the interests of filling vacancies. The consequence was that a manager had to be concerned with the sexual temptations that the Embassy staff might encounter, particularly in a country where corruption was so rampart. We were contributing to this vulnerability by our assignment process, which turned the Embassy into a male bastion—unlike other missions which had more gender diversity.

The Ambassador had not been aware of the extent of the problem in the Consular Section. He had been aware that Consular operations in Manila were different from the ones that he had known before—he had just come from Mexico City which had a large consular operation with its own problems. He was not familiar with consular operations in the Philippines. He assumed that the Manila Consular Section would be high profile and was inclined to give it the benefit of the doubt. As far as he knew, the Consular Section was run efficiently by people with excellent reputations. There was information available in the Security Office and elsewhere that called this into question and that had not been made available to the Ambassador; when that information was given to him, he moved aggressively. He insisted that procedures be put in place that would minimize the possibility of corruption; he made sure that deficiencies were corrected.

When we had completed our inspection and written our report, we had meetings with the Director General and her staff. Genta Hawkins, the DG at the time, was fully briefed; the issue was controversial because the focus happened to fall on a senior Foreign Service officer who had had an excellent reputation in the Department. I had written a corrective Inspector's evaluation report—as required by our procedures which call for mandatory evaluation reports to be written by inspectors on the Chief of Mission and his or her deputy and voluntary reports on any Foreign Service officer that an inspector feels warranted. Usually, evaluations are written when the observed performance is demonstratively different from the recorded performance. That was the situation I confronted in Manila which led me to write this corrective report in which I called attention to serious management deficiencies in the Consular Section. It was a controversial report.

The process called for the IG to send such reports to the DG for inclusion in the personnel file of the officer involved. The DG has the authority to withhold the evaluation report from the file if it is deemed to be inappropriate; that is a rare circumstance. Were the Director General to consistently ignore evaluations prepared by inspection teams, the Inspector General could take the matter directly to the Congressional Oversight Committee. So there

is a check and balance system. My evaluation report was thoroughly documented and I reviewed it carefully with the DG.

There is always an institutional reaction to a negative finding on an officer who has risen to senior ranks. The people responsible for having made the assignment are naturally defensive. On the other hand, the Office of Inspector General does not reach its judgment lightly. It therefore has some credibility. So it is important that an inspector's evaluation report be fully documented; then it is accepted by the system as a valid piece of work. In the case that I have mentioned, there was considerable discussion among those involved and responsible. The immediate result was that the officer's tour was abbreviated, which reinforced my findings. The officer concerned soon resigned from the Service and faced subsequent trial.

I came away from the Philippines with a feeling that our relations with that country were well along in a transition period. We had given up our bases, but the trauma that had initially set in after the failure of negotiations to retain these facilities, was dissipating. The Filipinos were focusing on how best to use those bases—i.e. free trade zones. There was a feeling that the Philippines had great economic potential, but that it was lagging seriously in its development behind its Southeast Asia neighbors—due importantly to corruption which had to be curbed if the Philippines was ever to reach its potential economically. There was also a lingering internal guerrilla war, but it was beginning to peter out, although still an irritant. There were some Philippine/China territorial problems, but the major issue was the question of when and how fast the Philippines would be integrated into the economic development schemes of the region, which depended in large part on the leadership's ability to take advantage of openings that might develop. We discussed this in our report as a basis for the general comment that more needed to be done to realize the rich potential in US/Philippine relations.

The Asia Development Bank was located in Manila. There was a question about the relationship between the Chief of Mission and the U.S. executive director of the Bank, who

had ambassadorial rank and a separate constituency in Washington outside the State Department. The executive director had his own reporting channels. We noted that the relationships between these two senior US government representatives needed to be sorted out. Our report resulted in a meeting of the minds between the two in Manila, even though no real action was taken in Washington to resolve the underlying problem.

Next, my team and I inspected the Bureau of International Organization Affairs (IO). That was a fascinating assignment. We looked at a number of issues; principal among them was the relative lack of attention that the U.S. government devotes to multilateral diplomacy. That deficiency is of increasing concern as more and more issues of interest to the U.S. are referred to and arbitrated in international forums. Other countries place greater emphasis on multilateral diplomacy. We have traditionally resisted in favor of bilateralism. That bias was evident in the operations of IO—particularly in its staffing. Functional bureaus in general are viewed as second tier assignments within the Department; IO does not rate highly even among functional bureaus. Too many people go to IO jobs for circumstantial reasons and then work to get out as quickly as they can.

Additionally, the premier international organization the United Nations (UN) is located in New York. The U.S. mission to the UN is viewed as a “hardship” post because of the high living costs. Furthermore, there has always been a degree of tension between the Assistant Secretary for International Organizations and our Permanent Representative to the UN. It is an unequal relationship; in theory guidance to our UN mission comes from the Secretary of State through the IO Assistant Secretary to the Permanent Representative. In practice, since the Permanent Representative is a Cabinet level officer, he or she does not take instructions from IO; that leaves the effectiveness of day-to-day operations at the mercy of the personal relationships between the Assistant Secretary and the Permanent Representative. If those relationships are cordial, then the results of this awkward arrangement may be reasonably satisfactory. Otherwise, it is a prescription for frustration and failure.

When we inspected IO, the Assistant Secretary was Doug Bennet and the Permanent Representative was Madeleine Albright—now the Secretary of State. During the inspection, we looked at many different aspects of IO's operations. The two senior officials had a cordial relationship, but it was still uneven because Albright was a Cabinet level official and Bennet was not. More often than not, she got her instructions from the White House; the Bureau was wise enough to adjust to that fact. It was not a sound organizational set-up, but the inclusion of the Permanent Representative in the Cabinet has been a tradition of long standing, with certain political advantages.

We did some traveling in connection with the IO inspection—i.e. to Geneva to look at our operations there as well as NY to talk to people there. We interviewed Ambassador Albright and she was very helpful to us; her comments allowed us to sharpen some of the issues which ranged from the question of dues arrearages to such matters as the employment of US citizens in the UN system. That last problem arose because IO has a mandate to encourage the hiring of US citizens by international organizations. The logic being that we, through mandatory assessments, were paying 25% of the budgets, but the employment levels of US citizens were far below that in virtually every international organization. Some entities thumb their noses at US citizens. One of the reasons we were not getting a fair share of the jobs was because we were not identifying enough suitable candidates for vacancies in these organizations. We were making it very easy for them to fill their vacancies with non-US nationals because either US candidates were not available or those put forward were not suitable.

Another issue dealt with the inordinate size of US delegations to international meetings. IO has an Office of International Conferences which has explicit responsibilities in this area. It has its own budget which was far too small to make an impact on this issue. The theory was that this Office would have a central coordinating role within the U.S. government, including oversight over the size of US delegations. In fact, that was not happening. This Office was led by an official far too junior to take on Cabinet level officers; bureaucratic

log-rolling was too often the norm. The Secretary of State's authority to approve the composition of all official delegations to international conferences gave the Department, and IO, in theory, at least, a powerful tool with which to impose discipline. But in practice, accreditation has become largely a rubber stamp operation. This authority is unevenly applied. Some agencies are unaware of the Secretary's responsibility. When that authority was exercised, it was not for policy reasons, but arbitrarily and for reasons which would not stand close inspection. We discussed this in our report, but it is still a problem today. The size of delegations is arbitrary; the presence of a US delegation to an international conference is dictated more by the availability of funds to various Cabinet departments than by US interests—where they are coincident, that is fine, but often they are not.

When it comes to inspectors' recommendations which cut across Cabinet departments, implementation becomes problematic. Most inspections are carried out against established standards—i.e. what is the standard and what is the performance and why does a law, regulation, and norms of operation. If a disparity exists between the established standard and observed practice, recommendations are made to bring the two into line. In the case of international delegations, there was a standard—i.e. IO's mandate to coordinate participation in international conferences. But there are so many conflicting interests that no one really used the authority available to the Bureau. In this instance, we highlighted the problem for both the administration and the Congress. But this was another instance in which the transition in the Office of Inspector General worked against vigorous follow-up of the inspectors' recommendations. Delegations remain too large, and coordination within the Executive Branch continues to be inadequate.

My next inspection was Canada. We have an Embassy and six consulates in Canada, stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The main issue was the coordination of policy because, quite understandably, what we found was that the closeness of Canada was an invitation for every US government agency to conduct business directly with its Canadian counterpart, either by phone or with a quick trip. Often the Embassy was neither consulted nor informed, which makes the management of policy quite difficult. There were some

that argued that, given the nature of our relationship with Canada, we should not even have an embassy in Ottawa. There was a serious coordination problem. Many ideas and proposals had been tabled over the years; prominent among those was the suggestion that a super-coordinator for Canadian affairs be appointed who would oversee all our Canadian programs and policies. Such official would be placed in the State Department. Part of the argument was that Canadian matters did not get sufficient attention in the Bureau of European and Canadian Affairs (EUR), which was probably true. A special coordinator at the assistant secretary level, or even higher, would not assure necessary attention either, not to mention that a similar organization might have to be created for Mexican affairs to maintain some semblance of even-handedness. My inspection team found that this problem should continue to be monitored, although the then chief of mission —a former governor of Michigan—was doing a good coordinating job. He had direct access to the White House and could call anyone in Washington he wished. That assured an adequate level of coordination and an ability to get quick decisions when needed. In some ways, he had found the ideal way to solve the problem, but there was no assurance that an administration would always fill the Canada post with a political operative who had direct access to the White House and good policy sense. With some exceptions—which we noted—Embassy Ottawa was doing an effective job of coordination; but its success depended heavily in the role of a single individual and therefore could not be counted on in a long-term solution.

While not taking on the “super coordinator” issue, we did make some suggestions to the Embassy on how it might improve its internal coordination and how the Ambassador might be more aggressive in his oversight of the day-to-day operations of the many US agencies represented in Canada, some of which were not adequately being supervised. We looked closely at the activities of the non-career Ambassador, to ensure that none crossed the line into partisan activities that are not appropriate for a chief of mission to be involved in. There are clear limits on this subject that are spelled out in legislation and regulations. Inspectors do look at this issue to make sure that the chief of mission abides by those

standards. We did not find any problems on this in Canada, but the chief of mission found our discussions of this topic to be helpful.

One of the big issues in Canada was the status of a number of US officials assigned to Canada. The largest US official presence in Canada was from the U.S. Customs and Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). Now that was not entirely surprising. But their status was more the result of informal arrangements and understandings than formal government-to-government agreements. As a consequence, the terms were not consistent; for example, privilege and immunity status was not clear cut. There were some official Americans who had been working in Canada for 15-20 years. They were all U.S. citizens, but essentially had been “Canadianized.” The Canadians found it difficult to accept that these people—whom they considered to be residents—should be in a special category. The rules were not clear; so there were some problems. The Customs and INS people, when asked, replied that their chain of command went directly to their headquarters in Washington. The Ambassador, much less the Secretary of State, never was seen as part of their chain of command. Since the chief of mission has a role for the direction and protection of all U.S. government employees assigned to the country of accreditation, we tried to sort this out. We did make some progress and I believe that, subsequently, agreements have been reached settling the issue.

After Canada, I inspected three African countries: Tanzania, Madagascar, and Zaire (now the Congo). It was a fascinating experience. I had never really seen Africa, beyond Egypt. The issues in Tanzania and Madagascar tended to be primarily aid related—management issues—and in Tanzania, refugees. We thought that our assistance goals were not clear enough. The authority and responsibilities for coordination of all U.S. activities in a country were not being adequately prosecuted. In Zaire, the primary issue was security. Members of the foreign community had been threatened; there had been considerable violence in the country; the government was breaking down and the transition path from Mobutu to someone else was unclear. We had supported Mobutu for many years, but it was

increasingly clear that his days in command were coming to an end and yet he was not willing to consider a transition to a democratic regime.

The security problem manifested itself in a decision reached sometime before we got to Kinshasa which established a ceiling on the number of official Americans who could be assigned to Zaire. This ceiling was 38. When we arrived, we looked at the staffing pattern—as all inspectors do—and found that there were considerably more Americans in country than the ceiling permitted. We found that agencies were circumventing the ceiling which had been established by the Under Secretary of State. The average was all “TDY” which was very expensive and undermined the ability of the chief of mission to manage his operations. He didn't always know who was there. The U.S. establishment in Zaire previously had been a very large one; the bureaucracy in essence just refused to shrink. Our judgment was that 38 was a sensible ceiling. Even without the security problem; it was adequate to the requirements of our objectives in Zaire. We were concerned that unless a better personnel control system were installed, the mission staff would always be larger than 38. We recommended the closure of our consulate in Lubumbashi, which for six years had had no Americans assigned to it. It was staffed by a small number of national employees, but it retained some very valuable real estate and equipment. US interests, at the time, did not justify this expense. So we recommended that the post be closed, which it eventually was.

Underlying instability in Zaire (Congo) that occupy today's headlines could be seen at the time of the inspection—the anarchy, the violence, etc. The main foreign power in Zaire was Belgium, the former colonial power; the French also had strong interests in the country. Unless those two countries and the U.S. could agree on a common set of objectives and a policy for pursuing, it was likely that they would work at cross-purposes with little progress being made. For example, to encourage a transition to democracy, we had put some sanctions in place. We had decided not to give visas to certain political leaders. The Zairians couldn't care less; they wanted to go to Europe not to the United States. So, if the policy were to be effective, it had to be also followed by the Europeans.

They didn't. Mobutu traveled to France, Belgium, and Switzerland on a regular basis, thumbing his nose at the US. Everyone recognized what was going on but there was no will to face up to the challenges. We tried to highlight these issues as well. Our report also focused on the staffing issues, the adequacy of security precautions, and of the evacuation plans. We found that much more needed to be done in all of these areas, as subsequent events dramatically illustrated.

An overarching issue in all three countries was the failure of the U.S. government to get maximum return for the resources it devoted to each. The principal stumbling block was the inadequate coordination among US agencies. Typically, the USAID missions had the largest staff and the most resources—except in Zaire, where the program had been terminated. We found separate administrative operations to support separate agencies; the State Department, the USAID missions, the Peace Corps and even some of the smaller agencies had their own support staffs. We made some proposals to the chiefs of mission for the consolidation of these support operations. We found in Tanzania and Madagascar that the USAID missions were quite willing to go along with such consolidation and we tried to advance the concept with the ambassadors with mixed results. There was some receptivity in Washington, but our recommendations in the end fell victim to the agency consolidation debate in Washington. USAID, as an institution, dug in its heels against anything that approximated consolidation anywhere. I think our recommendations were correct but they got caught up in the politics of agency consolidation in Washington.

Another issue was the refugee problem, evident in Tanzania and Zaire. The U.S. devotes large amounts of resources to refugee assistance provided primarily through the Bureau of Refugee, Population and Migration Affairs, through multilateral organizations, and through non-governmental institutions. The oversight by the embassies was not what it should have been, even though a major portion of the assistance being provided to refugees in these two countries came originally from the American taxpayer. Embassies did not see this to be their role; typically, refugee assistance oversight was an additional duty for a

junior consular officer, even, as in Tanzania, when the refugee assistance program was the largest consumer of Congressionally appropriated resources in the country. We were not devoting adequate oversight to these programs. Our Chief of Mission in Tanzania did get involved because he had some previous experience in refugee work in country, but his intervention was episodic. We tried to get attention to this issue through our report. I think that our comments were helpful; they might have gotten even greater attention had the Office of Inspector General not been in transition.

To its credit, the Office of the Inspector General, under new leadership, has evolved into a more effective organization, particularly in its relationship to Congress—an association which is not always welcomed by the Department, but which is overdue as far as I am concerned. It should be noted that the Department's IG started in 1906 and is the oldest in the government. They were six officials then called “Consul Generals at Large.” The Department since then has gone through several manifestations of the IG concept, as have other Cabinet departments and agencies. By now the IG's mandate has been broadened considerably, particularly after 1987 when the current IG statute was enacted. That law says that the IG will not be a Foreign Service officer to make it abundantly clear that the Inspector General should not be an “in house” creature—a captive of the Department's bureaucracy. The statutory and budgetary independence which the legislation provides is essential if the IG is to have any impact.

After Africa, I was asked to head a team to inspect the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA). The State Department's IG is also ACDA's IG, more recently, also covers USIA and its associated broadcasting entities. The main issue we confronted was the question of consolidation—the proposed ACDA into the Department. This proposal had been made shortly before the inspection by Senator Helms, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. It was not the first time that such an idea had been advanced, but Senator Helms held a powerful position and was determined to see his idea implemented. He wanted both ACDA and USAID abolished and their functions, to the extent they were retrained, absorbed by the Department. That was not the primary focus of

our ACDA review. We were conducting a policy-based examination of overall operations of the agency.

In the ACDA case, we had another bench mark. Several years prior, there had been a special review of ACDA conducted by OIG at the request of Congress. That review examined the question of whether the Agency should continue to exist. A blue ribbon panel, representing various agencies, was put together under the IG's leadership. That panel concluded that the agency should continue, but needed to be revitalized. It listed a number of actions that the panel thought were necessary. Their findings became one of our standards; i.e. what had ACDA done to implement the blue ribbon panel's conclusions? More generally, we looked at ACDA's mandate and how efficiently was it carrying it out. The issue of agency consolidation was addressed through our review of the arms control and disarmament functions in the U.S. government. We looked at the question whether there was a legitimate need for an independent voice in this area—quite aside from the question of how that voice was to be provided. We concluded that there were still enough unresolved issues that an independent voice continued to be justified. We were concerned that there was still a major tendency in the bureaucracy to subordinate arms control and non-proliferation objectives to other concerns. One way to make sure that the proponents of the arms control and non-proliferation perspective had their “day in court” was to give them a degree of independence. That did not say that the continued existence of ACDA was the only way to ensure this independence. So we were not as supportive of the Agency's continued existence as the ACDA Director would have liked nor did we explicitly endorse the consolidation proposal.

We looked at other issues as well. We reviewed whether there was overlap between ACDA and the Department's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs. The NSC staff had looked at that issue and concluded that 13 positions in each organization should be abolished. It was clear to us that the NSC examination had not gone far enough; the right questions had been asked, but the results were Salomonic, simply splitting the difference between the two bureaucracies. It had not been comprehensive enough. So we recommended

that a more thorough review be undertaken of this question. We recognized that unless ACDA were abolished entirely, some duplication between ACDA and the Department was inevitable. But that was not necessarily a problem because the issues were being viewed from differing perspectives—one foreign policy oriented, the other an arms control viewpoint. We emphasized the need to resolve the question of lead, responsibility within the U.S. government on specific arms control and proliferation issues, thereby avoiding duplication where it served no purpose. The lead agency might inherit some resources from other organizations—staff moving between ACDA and P/M—but we did not want to see the establishment of a monopoly in one agency or another on arms control and proliferation issues.

Another question that we addressed concerned technology research. ACDA had a responsibility under law for coordination of governmentwide research in the area of arms control and non-proliferation. That authority was granted in legislation following the previous OIG review of ACDA activities. In examining this question, it was obvious that ACDA, with a minute research budget, is swamped by the large research budgets in DoD and DOE. The rule of bureaucracy is that those who have the money call the tune. We found that ACDA was not adequately structured to provide oversight over governmentwide research and did not have the bureaucratic clout necessary to override the power of the purse. We were leaning toward recommending that ACDA's mandate be explicitly expanded by the President to ensure that it was taken seriously in its coordinating role. While we were conducting our inspection the ACDA Director was indeed given additional authority; that gave us some pause and we decided that some time should elapse to see how this new authority would be used before considering further steps. The ACDA Director argued for this approach; we were skeptical but thought that under the circumstances, a grace period was justifiable.

We found a problem in the administrative area of ACDA; there seemed to be some confusion about responsibilities in this area, although legislation clearly establishes the Deputy Director as the official responsible for the Agency's administrative management.

In practice, that was not taking place. In our discussions with the Director and the Deputy Director, the latter committed himself to be more diligent in this area and action was subsequently taken to implement this pledge. The Deputy was Ralph Earl, one of the best known experts on arms control and non-proliferation.

After ACDA, I was contemplating retirement. I was asked by the new Inspector General to stay on to head up the Office of Inspections and later to be her deputy. The new Inspector General was Jacqueline Williams-Bridges who came to the job following 17 years of service with the GAO. She had a strong background in management and policy analysis. I was very impressed with her. I had been involved in inspections for several years by this time. I had seen a number of areas where significant improvements could be made in the work of the Office of Inspector General. I thought the new IG would take some strong actions to realize the full potential of the Office. So I agreed to stay on.

For the next year, I coordinated the activities of the inspection teams. In a given year, the IG undertakes some 40-45 inspections, mostly overseas, but also including domestic bureaus, and ACDA, now USIA. Soon after I took the job, legislation was passed that established a single IG to oversee the activities of State, ACDA, and USIA. This could be viewed as one of the first steps toward consolidation of these agencies. The USIA IG was terminated and the staff was transferred to our office. That was a significant step, the expanded OIG assumed additional responsibilities and opportunities as well. For the first time, an inspection team was authorized to review the programmatic aspects of USIA programs overseas. That opened up opportunities for more comprehensive reviews of our operations overseas. Initially, we faced the issue of independence. In State, the Office of Inspector General is staffed primarily by Civil Service employees going back to the 1987 legislation. The far fewer Foreign Service people are essentially recruited by the OIG; they are not simply assigned to OIG by the Department. We found that this was not the situation in USIA where its Office of Personnel routinely assigned Foreign Service personnel to the USIA OIG, which had very little control over the process. We first asked the USIA Office of Personnel to announce that there would be vacancies in the single

State/ACDA/USIA OIG and that Foreign Service officers should put in their bids if they were interested. Eventually, we got a list and noticed that some of the officers on it had already been assigned to us. We quickly set this straight; we would not take personnel assigned without our approval. So USIA had to change several of the assignments. We took some people off the list given to us by USIA but went out and recruited other officers as well. We had to change the image of the OIG within USIA so that we could attract the kind of officer most useful to us.

With the arrival of the new Inspector General, more effective communication channels with the Congress were established. Almost immediately after her appointment, the Inspector General invited key staffers of the relevant oversight committees to a day long conference at a site between State and the Hill. We took the opportunity to introduce ourselves, spell out our responsibilities, and gave the staffers a preview of our work program for the following year. So the OIG's relationship with the Congress is more open; that places a new burden on the office because communications flow both ways, which means more requests from the Congress—including special inquiries. In dealing with Congress, one has to be very careful; both sides of the political aisle must be treated exactly the same. Consultations must include representatives of the minority as well as the majority. Investigations have to be conducted scrupulously, particularly those which might have political visibility and content.

The alleged Congressional micromanagement of foreign affairs has always been a subject for debate. For example, many have criticized Congress for its “earmarking.” The subject is not as clear cut as it has been portrayed. In my view, a significant reason for “earmarking” is the Congressional response to the perceived lack of action on the part of the Executive Branch. At times, for example, Congress has believed that US foreign policy should give greater emphasis to human rights, women's rights, drug enforcement, and environment. It may well be that there are not enough resources to pursue all of these worthy goals, but nevertheless Congress expects its policy guidance to be respected. When it believes that it has not been, then it “earmarks” resources to ensure that its

priorities are reflected in policy; it is a mark of dissatisfaction with administration policies and programs. So “earmarking” is not mindless; it has a purpose. Often during inspections, we found the effect of the “earmark” was not at all what Congress had intended; when that is the situation, as it was on Egypt and some of the African regional programs, then it is perfectly legitimate to raise questions about the “earmark.” When an inspection report does that, it suggests to Congress that it take another look at the actual reason than just the intended impact of the “earmark.” The results of “earmarks” are frequently a distortion of policy, rather than promoting the desired effect. This conclusion, however, does not dispute the legitimacy of the earmarking process.

I would make another point on the work of the OIG. The office provides a valuable perspective to the age long dichotomy between Civil and Foreign Service personnel. As I mentioned earlier, the staff of the OIG is predominantly Civil Service. This includes most of the senior staff. In contrast, most of the senior policy positions in the Department are staffed with Foreign Service officers or political appointees. In the Department, the Director General has traditionally had responsibility for both Civil Service and Foreign Service personnel, but in actual practice, it is the Foreign Service that has received the lion's share of attention. Increasingly, that is not an acceptable situation. The Department is having great difficulty adjusting to this new environment. At issue, are such challenges as the development of career service with special responsibilities and requirements overseas and the question of equity and fairness, particularly relating to Civil Service employees. The Department has not really come to terms with those issues.

In the inspection function, we would normally use a former chief of mission to head each inspection team, which consisted of perhaps one or two other Foreign Service officers and six to eight Civil Service employees. With such a mix, the Office of Inspector General is at the cutting edge of some of these Foreign/Civil Service adjustment problems. Service in the OIG points up some of the larger problems that the Department and some other foreign affairs agencies face in this area.

I would make one final point, which is relatively obvious. It is important that an Inspector General maintain independence despite the natural tension this at times leads to in relations with the Department, USIA, and ACDA. At the same time, there must be a high degree of cooperation because the effectiveness of the OIG depends in great part on the degree to which the OIG focuses on issues which are relevant and important to the managers of the agencies for which OIG has oversight responsibilities. In the inspection function, that will only happen if the inspectors are cognizant and current on the major issues facing the entity to be inspected. In the Department, it has become routine for the Inspector General or one of the senior staff to attend the weekly staff meetings chaired by the head of the agency—Secretary of State or ACDA or USIA Director. They may also be invited to other staff meetings as appropriate and relevant. Although the OIG mandate is very broad, that can not mean that the OIG staff has the time to cover all issues. But the broad mandate is essential to ensure that OIG personnel have access to all documents and records.

I never encountered any real resistance to inspections from my Foreign Service colleagues. I suspect that the consular officer in the Philippines did not think very highly of me or the system, but that was an exception. There may be a level of discomfort with the job, but that is inevitable whenever you have tension and potential or actual conflict. The Office of Inspector General conducts special inquiries; those tend to be more controversial than regularly scheduled inspections. In the recent past, many of these inquiries seem to have involved Latin America—e.g. the murder of the spouse of an American citizen in Guatemala or the alleged leniency accorded a planner of the murder of Marine Guards in El Salvador. Because of my previous assignments in the region and association within the bureau, I recused myself from Latin American special inquiries—that is standard practice in OIG; staff members must not involve themselves in matters where there might be an actual or perceived conflict of interest. I did not inspect any Latin American posts for this reason.

But, inevitably, one runs into controversy. The OIG is the “preserver of the rules and regulations” and in that sense is a friend of the system. But transgressors do not always view in that way. One of the special inquiries in which I was involved took me to the Vatican to investigate allegations made by Senator Helms about the chief of mission—a former Mayor of Boston—who was said to have misused his authority in communicating with audiences in the US—for political purposes. That was a fairly controversial issue. We wrote a report to the Secretary who accepted our recommendations and subsequently issued a letter of reprimand to the Ambassador and tightened the procedures within the Department dealing with such matters. That was unprecedented.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Mr. Ambassador, I suggest that a concluding paragraph summarizing your Foreign Service experience would be most helpful at this point.* * *

How does one sum up a career spanning more than 35 years?

Perhaps the most useful thing I can do is make some summary observations and highlight some “lessons learned” from my time in the Foreign Service. As I look back on the experience, there are certain conclusions which stand out from my various assignments. Let me list some of them.

— From my initial assignment in the Department's newly-established Operations Center (1961-62), I belatedly draw two conclusions, both important to success in the Foreign Service. The first, I attribute to my two junior officer colleagues on the night watch, Herb Hoffman and Gerry Studds. Each, in his own way, was an outstanding officer. Aside from their intelligence, what set them apart for me was that both knew clearly what they wanted from the Service. Their standards were high, and, I am sorry to say the Service failed to measure up. Unrealistic expectations combined with a relative decline in opportunities for actually reaching to top can be a powerful disincentive. This underscores the importance, first, of having internalized standards not exclusively dependent on the judgments of others, and second, of having a vision of what one expects from one's career. It is not

enough to aspire to an ambassadorship, although that is a worthy goal. How one goes about the job day-by-day often says more about character as well as expectations.

— During my first overseas assignment in Nicaragua (1963-65), in addition to tradecraft, I learned valuable lessons about the importance of integrity in reporting and keeping focused on the U.S. longer term interests. Ted Cheney, my boss in the Political Section, stood behind me in what, for a junior officer, could have been a career-ending policy confrontation with hemispheric representatives of the AFL-CIO. From Aaron Brown, an outstanding Ambassador, I learned some of the do's and don'ts of dealing with members of the democratic opposition. It is a grave disservice to those seeking the ouster of a repressive regime to mislead them about political realities, building false expectations about what the United States might be prepared to do. As much as we might sympathize with the opposition, Ambassador Brown always stressed, it was they, not the United States which have to face the consequences of failed actions to end the repressive rule of the Somozas. It was a sobering, but realistic message—perhaps as applicable to today's China as to the Nicaragua of the 1960s.

— The Dominican Republic (1965-67) was a testing ground for the effectiveness of multilateral diplomacy. The 1965 intervention took place under the auspices of the Organization of American States. While the United States played a disproportionate role in these events, a reasonably successful outcome depended importantly on our ability to meld bilateral and multilateral efforts. The Dominican episode was an early illustration as well of the limits of military force, although the lesson was not so apparent at the time. Key to the eventual outcome was the early identification of a clear objective—the holding of early elections overseen by the OAS.

— My next assignment in Recife, Brazil (1967-69), brought home to me the interdependence of political and economic developments and the consequences of basing policy exclusively on one or the other. U.S. policy at the time placed heavy emphasis on the economy, as did Brazil's military rulers, after they had subdued the opposition.

Human rights advocates, on the other hand, stressed the repressive nature of the regime in calling for U.S. disengagement. Neither approach was wholly right. Subsequent events have demonstrated the need for a more sophisticated approach which acknowledges that the vigor of the Brazilian economy depends importantly on the strength of its democratic institutions.

— The turbulent period at the University of Wisconsin (1970-71) probed some of the basic tenets of American democracy. The go-along-to-get-along attitude of too many of the university administrators and faculty members was discouraging. It provided unwelcome perspective on similar behavior I had witnessed in some of our unstable neighbors to the south. On a more positive note, the Wisconsin experience allowed me to replenish intellectual capital—particularly in the areas of political science and economics—on which I drew heavily in subsequent assignments. I remain convinced that periodic long-term training, preferably in American universities, is vital to maintaining a quality Foreign Service. In-service training provided by the Foreign Service Institute, while important, is no substitute for this academic exposure and reacquaintance with America.

— A subsequent assignment in the Policy and Planning Office of the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs (1971-74) provided my first extended exposure to policy planning and resource management. The work done by this office on the Country Analysis and Strategy Program, a pioneering effort to develop an interagency planning system linking resources to policy objectives, set a bureau-level standard in this area which has yet to be equaled by the Department. The failure of the Department, and the U.S. Government, to effectively address the policy-resource linkage is a management vulnerability which continues to hamper the achievement of foreign policy objectives. My policy planning experience also pointed to another shortcoming—the difficulty of effecting change within the Department. The traditional core values of the institution, reinforced by a culture which values individual virtuosity over the achievement of stated goals, works against the introduction of new ways of doing business.

— Revolutionary Portugal (1975-78) was an opportunity to apply much of the experience and lessons learned during previous assignments. The near Communist takeover in Portugal, and the high-level attention it received in Washington, again underscored the importance of honesty in reporting. There was undeniable pressure to pull punches: to cater to the biases in Washington; to give up on Portugal, resigning ourselves to Marxist rule in Lisbon as a vaccination to a possible Communist infection of Western Europe. There were other lessons as well, such as the importance of maintaining contacts across the political and social spectrum, including with those strongly opposed to our views. In the end, of course, it was the Portuguese themselves who turned things around and put their country squarely on the democratic path. But the Embassy played an important confidence-building role through its repeated message that, given time and support, democratic political forces would prevail.

— The National War College (1978-79) was an opportunity to take stock and again to renew intellectual capital. The curriculum, while not rigorous, was flexible and therefore useful. More specialized courses at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces were especially valuable. The assignment, however, carried with it a negative lesson: the Department needs to devote greater attention to arranging onward assignments for those selected for senior training. Failure to do so—and until recently the time-in-class implications of taking an assignment with no promotion potential—continues to work against getting the full potential from such potentially valuable placements.

— My three years in London (1979-81) exposed me to the complexities of relationships with a major ally. The importance of other agencies and the Congress in the making of foreign policy was every day apparent. So too was the media and the myriad channels of direct communication between the two countries. Embassy London was a eye-opening look—really for the first time in my career—at the full range of foreign policy issues at play on the global scene, particularly defense issues. At the same time, my

extensive associations with the British Labor Party gave me lasting friendships and a new appreciation for the role of democratic opposition and the European left.

— Uruguay (1982-85), where I was Deputy Chief of Mission, provided essential management experience, much of it hard-won. While no training can assure success in arguably the most challenging of Foreign Service positions, the Department, to its credit, is making an important effort through its short course for new DCMs. My Ambassador insisted that I arrive immediately, foregoing the DCM course. While the exception probes the rule, prior experience as a DCM should be prerequisite for those career officers considered for chief of mission positions.

— My three years as Director of the Office of Central American and Panamanian Affairs (1985-88) placed me in the midst of a highly controversial and partisan political debate in the United States. From a professional standpoint it turned out to be high risk, high reward for those who survived with their careers intact. Some of my colleagues took away the wrong lesson from this. Too often they concluded that positions dealing with controversial policies were likely to be career-ending and therefore should be avoided. Unfortunately, for some fine officers I served with this turned out to be true. The growing propensity, particularly within the Congress, to judge career officers associated with policies with which individual members or their staffs might disagree to be disqualified for positions requiring confirmation is a disturbing tendency. More alarming still is the preemptive de-selection of these officers for these senior positions to avoid problems on the Hill. Ironically, this trend, if unchecked, is likely to lead to greater, not less, politicization of the Foreign Service, as senior officers increasingly duck the really tough jobs—which are more likely to be controversial—while devoting more and more attention to currying favor on the Hill.

— Nicaragua (1989) was dramatically different the second time around. Unfortunately, the ruling Sandinistas had more than a little in common with the Somozistas they replaced. Both were authoritarian; both employed repression against their own people. Somoza and

his supporters did it for personal aggrandizement; the Sandinistas did it for the new state, controlled by a vanguard party which it generously subsidized. Being Ambassador to a country whose government we openly opposed was a unique experience. The Sandinista leadership, while keeping me at arms length, objected to my public statements of support for democracy and open contacts with members of the opposition. In retrospect, the ensuing Sandinista action declaring me persona non-grata had a certain inevitability about it.

— My subsequent brief tenure as Deputy Assistant Secretary (1989) with responsibility for relations with Mexico and the Caribbean, as well as regional economic matters brought home to me the changing role of the Department in the management of foreign policy. Only in those few instances in which the Secretary of State took a personal and direct interest was the Department able to assert its policy leadership. More often than not, foreign policy considerations were decidedly secondary to domestic concerns, with de facto leadership passing to another agency of government, the White House staff, the Congress, or other advocacy groups.

— My nomination to be Ambassador to Brazil (1989-93) was a most welcome surprise. Embassy Brasilia gave me a new appreciation for the importance of administrative management and quality of life issues to the successful conduct of diplomacy. Chiefs of mission and senior policy managers must be personally engaged in and accountable for all aspects of mission operations. From my Brazilian colleagues, I developed a new appreciation for the importance of multilateral diplomacy for the advancement of what increasingly for the United States is a global agenda. The highly professional Brazilian Foreign Service has long made this a top priority, greatly increasing Brazil's influence in international forums.

— My final period of active service duty in the Office of Inspector General (1993-97) was an opportunity to give something back to the Service, largely through the leadership of teams inspecting our missions abroad. Several impressions stand out from this

experience. While policy management at our overseas posts is generally of a high order, the same cannot be said for administrative management. Failure of chiefs of mission to take this as one of their major responsibilities is among the prominent causes of this serious shortcoming. Another continuing deficiency both in the Department and our posts abroad is inadequate coordination of programs and activities to ensure the effective use of resources across agency lines to advance U.S. interests.* * *

Let me make some final comments about the role of the family in Foreign Service life. I entered the Service in another era. It was a period with relatively few women officers and certainly no tandem husband-wife teams. If a woman officer married within the Service, it was assumed she would resign. Women who had passed the Foreign Service examination were routinely disqualified if they married serving officers. All of this is now changed. But the weight of this thinking carried over during much of my career and, particularly during the early years, weighed heavily on attitudes towards the role of the Foreign Service spouse. Wives were expected to be supportive homemakers and hostesses for representational events. Gainful employment while abroad was generally discouraged.

My wife graduated with me from Cornell University with a major in political science, and she was every bit as qualified as I to perform professional tasks abroad. She continued her education over the years, obtaining a teaching certificate and becoming a licensed CPA. During our several tours in the United States she taught high school and was a tax advisor and later an agent with the IRS. Professional level jobs were hard to come by overseas, particularly in the early years. She was a tax advisor in the IRS office in London, full-time manager of a large employee association in Lisbon, and a tax advisor and consultant to the employee associations in Montevideo and Brasilia. To avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest, most of her consultant's work was unpaid.

For the family there were both positive as well as negative aspects of Foreign Service life. It was a continuing challenge to ensure quality education for my three children. Overseas schools are a mixed bag, particularly in the developing countries in which I served. I

received some good advice early in my career: take the hardship assignments early while your health is good and your children are young; to the extent possible, plan your assignments to ensure good academic facilities are available at the pivotal periods in the education of your children. For the most part, I was able to do this. The most difficult period was Portugal, where the quality of the American school left much to be desired. We sent two of our children back to Virginia for a time to attend public school in Fairfax County. All three, however, graduated from the American International School in London with impressive advanced placement credits. One graduated from the University of Virginia and obtained a Masters degree from The College of William and Mary; another graduated from Dartmouth College and earned a medical degree from Northwestern University; the third graduated from Cornell University and obtained her Doctorate in clinical psychology from American University.

In retrospect, one of the benefits of being overseas when my three children were coming of age was the insulation it provided during a traumatic period in the United States, particularly in the schools. There were the usual teenage temptations available even in revolutionary Lisbon, but thankfully drugs were not easily available. We were spared the horrors which flow from this source. While work pressures took their toll on family responsibilities, somehow we survived it all in reasonably good order. For this I give the bulk of the credit to my wife. America has changed. And the Foreign Service has also changed, if more grudgingly. The importance of the family for the Foreign Service, however, remains no less vital today than it was throughout my career. Family members are the unsung heroes of the Foreign Service.

End of interview